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# ENGLISH 10

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## MODULE

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### 5



## Poetic Experience



**Distance  
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# **English 10**

## **Module 5**

# **POETIC EXPERIENCE**



**Distance  
Learning**

**Alberta**  
EDUCATION

English 10  
Student Module  
Module 5  
Poetic Experience  
Alberta Distance Learning Centre  
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Welcome to Module 5!


We hope you'll enjoy your study of Poetic Experience.

We've included a prerecorded audiocassette with this module. The cassette will help you work through the material and it will enhance your listening skills.

So whenever you see this icon,



turn on your tape and listen.



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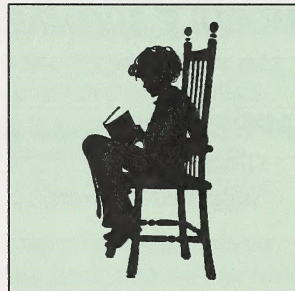
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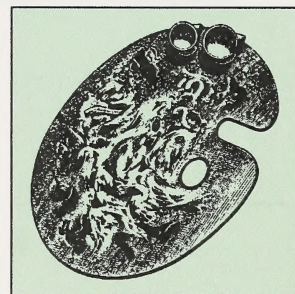
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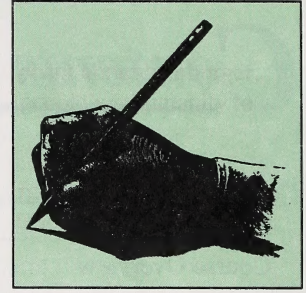


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## OVERVIEW



**“Sir, what is poetry?”**

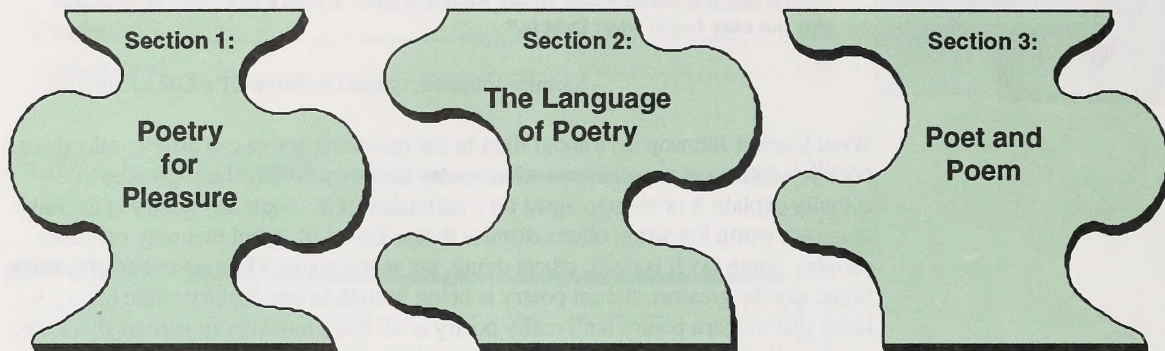
**“Why, Sir, it is much easier to say what it is not. We all know what light is, but it is not easy to tell what light is.”**

– Samuel Johnson, quoted in Boswell’s *Life of Johnson*

What Samuel Johnson says about light in the quotation above can also be said about poetry; while most people know what poetry is, they would be hard-pressed to actually explain it or even to agree on a definition of it. Some say poetry is the only language worth knowing; others dismiss it as a Tower of Babel that only confuses people. Some say it is dead, others dying, but many claim it has never been healthier. Some say the greatest, richest poetry is being written in our century while others insist that modern poetry isn’t really poetry at all but a mockery of serious literature.

If the so-called experts can’t agree on what poetry is, is it any wonder that students may find it difficult to figure out? Often students like being given hard-and-fast rules – the kind that can be easily memorized for tests. But poetry offers very few of these. Instead it resembles life; if you keep stopping to wait for directions, you’re not going to get very far. Poetry depends on readers who enjoy thinking as individuals, who can make up their own minds, and who are willing to step right into a poem. This module gives you the chance to take an honest look at poetry and to consider its many possibilities.

## Module 5: Poetic Experience



### Evaluation

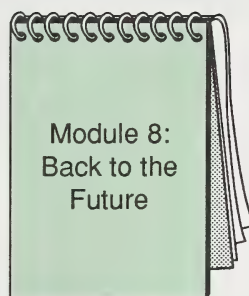
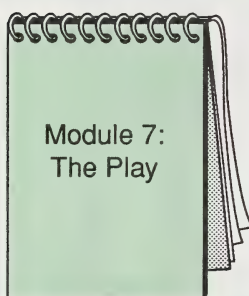
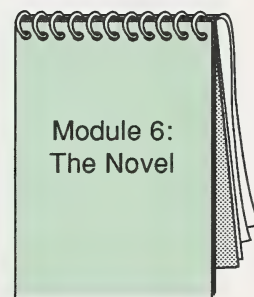
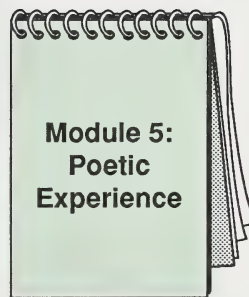
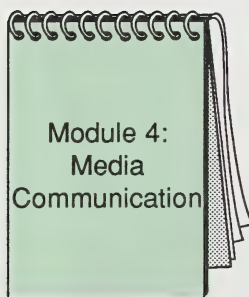
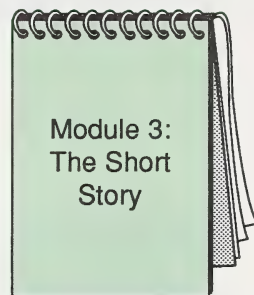
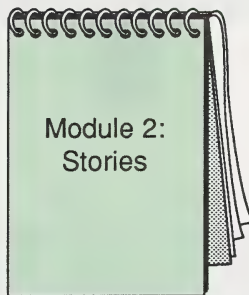
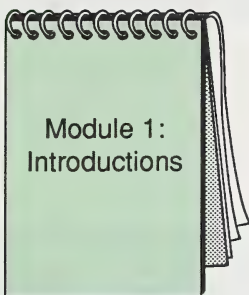
Your mark in this module will be determined by your work in the Assignment Booklet, which contains three section assignments. The mark distribution is as follows:

Section 1 Assignment	30%
Section 2 Assignment	35%
Section 3 Assignment	<u>35%</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>



## Course Overview

English 10 contains eight modules.



# SECTION

# 1





# POETRY FOR PLEASURE



Do you enjoy reading – or even writing – poetry? Many people do. Unfortunately, however, students are often taught to see reading poetry as a duty rather than as a pleasure. You may have been told “Here, read this poem. It’s good for you.” It shouldn’t be that way. Reading poetry can be a wonderfully moving experience. It should affect you – whether it’s funny, sad, or serious. Poetry is meant to be enjoyed, so if you find it leaves you cold, you’re not approaching it effectively.

Generally poets write in response to feelings. Their poems attempt to communicate their feelings to the reader in as direct and artistic a manner as possible. In this way poetry is the same as music. To say “I hate poetry,” as some people do, is like saying, “I hate feeling.” Then there are those who insist “I wouldn’t dream of writing poetry.” Isn’t that really the same as saying “I don’t want to express my feelings”? Anyone can feel and express his or her feelings. Likewise anyone can appreciate and, yes, even write, poetry. You may not think your own poetry is very good, but don’t sell yourself short. After all, your feelings are just as worthy and sincere as any “real” poet’s.

In this section you’ll be approaching poetry as something that’s fun. You’ll read and respond to a variety of poems, orally and in writing, and you’ll even write your own poems. At the end of the section you’ll put together a mini-anthology of poems about a topic that interests you.

## Activity 1: Why Poetry?



**Wei:** Poetry!? Ms. Grotowski, do we have to?

**Ms. Grotowski:** You make it sound like medicine.

**Wei:** More like a disease.

**Ms. Grotowski:** Why, Wei? What don't you like about poetry?

**Wei:** Let me count the ways.



**Ms. Grotowski:** Please do.

**Wei:** First of all, it rhymes. I hate rhymes. They make me feel as if I'm back in nursery school. Second, hardly any poems have a plot. I don't want to read about flowers in spring; I want some action. Third, poetry's old-fashioned – like Shakespeare. Nobody talks like that in real life.



1. Go ahead; it's your turn. Put yourself in Wei's position. Do you have any pet peeves about poetry? Write them down. If you want, ask other people for their thoughts about poetry and write down their comments.

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Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 1: Activity 1.

**Sam:** The thing is, Ms. Grotowski, it's all too airy-fairy for me. There aren't any rules. A poem can mean this or it can mean that – anything but what the actual words tell you.

**Ms. Grotowski:** Can you give me an example?

**Sam:** Okay. Let's say you have us read a poem about hamburger.

**Ms. Grotowski:** Hamburger...?



**Sam:** Why not? I like hamburger. Now, if we studied a poem about hamburger, you'd probably tell us it's really about love or sharing, or people's inhumanity to others – whereas me, all I see is a poem about dead meat.

**Ms. Grotowski:** But surely, Sam, when you eat a hamburger, you're not just thinking of dead meat. What about the bun, the cheese, the lettuce, the pickles, the onion? Why are they there, Sam?

**Sam:** They're fixings, that's all. They fill out the burger.

**Ms. Grotowski:** But they also take your mind off the dead meat, don't they – beyond the literal meaning? Imagine if that was as far as our imagination could go – dead meat. Do you really think they would have sold fifty billion hamburgers?



**Sam:** I don't like imagination. I want reality.

**Ms. Grotowski:** But how do you know what reality is unless you can imagine it? Go beyond the dead meat, Sam. Try looking for the suggested meaning – the figurative possibilities in the words. Tell me, Sam, when was the last time you had a hamburger?

**Sam:** Who, me? Uh, last Saturday. I went with my girlfriend to the movies and then we stopped off at the Burger Barn on the way home. And I know what you're thinking – my girlfriend was there so it wasn't really a burger at all. It was true love or flowers in spring or that kind of stuff.





**Ms. Grotowski:** Was it?

**Sam:** Look, it was just a hamburger. What do you want me to say – that her lips looked like curled-up french fries, or that her eyes were as round as onion rings, or that her hair smelled like, like – ?

**Ms. Grotowski:** Let me guess – vanilla ice cream?

**Sam:** No, of course not. More like a milkshake. Strawberry. Real strawberries, too – none of that artificial syrup stuff that tastes like plastic.

**Ms. Grotowski:** Careful, Sam, you're beginning to sound like a poet!

**Sam:** What're you trying to do – scare me?

It's always been impossible to get people to agree on what good poetry is or isn't. These days getting people to agree on what is or isn't an actual poem isn't any less difficult. The best advice is probably to trust your own instincts.

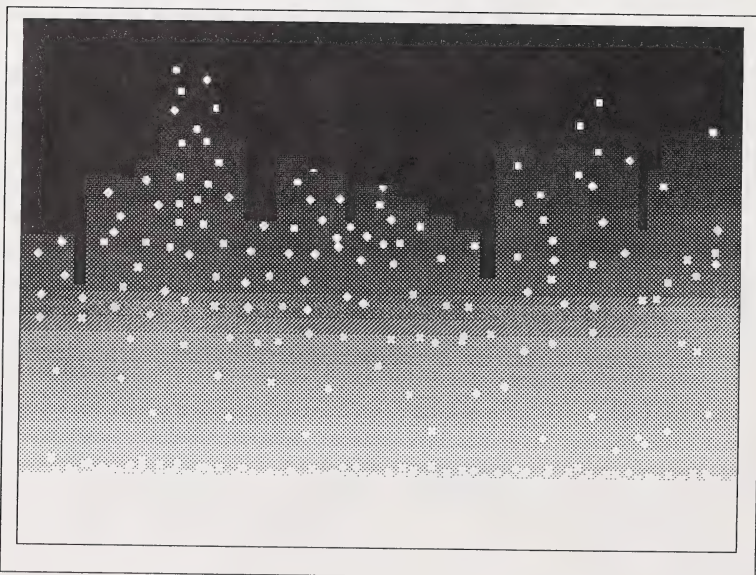
## JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following ideas.

1. What are the positive reasons for reading poetry? Imagine that students were no longer taught poetry, all books of poetry were burned, and all song lyrics banned. In what ways would people suffer? Write down your ideas.
2. What kind of poems do you enjoy? Think of the lyrics to songs that you like, or think of one of the narrative ballads that you read in Module 2. Identify concrete reasons as to why you like a particular piece so you can defend your judgement against the “Sams” of the world. Jot down your ideas.
3. Contrary to what Sam thinks, poetry is all around you. All you need to do in order to find it is wonder a little. Sit back in your chair. Look around the room. Go to the window and look outside. Is there anything in your world that makes you say “I wonder, . . .”?



Turn to page 12 in *Poetry in Focus* and read the poem “I Wonder How Many People in This City” by Leonard Cohen.





2. a. From what you've learned about poetry in earlier grades, do you think this is, in fact, a poem? Explain why or why not.

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- b. What do you think the poet is trying to say?<sup>1</sup>

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Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Activity 1.

### JOURNAL

In your Journal write your own "I wonder. . ." poem about the people around you. Then look it over. Were you able to capture what you really feel?

When you respond to a poem, it's good to begin by exploring any personal connections you feel with the subject. In the poem "At Seventeen," Janis Ian describes the problems and complexities of growing up. As you read it, relate it to your own experience as a teenager. Have you ever felt awkward, unattractive, or out-of-step with the rest of the world? If so, you may identify with the girl in the poem.



<sup>1</sup> Globe/Modern Curriculum Press for the adaptation of a question from *Poetry in Focus* by Cameron et al, page 14. Reprinted by permission of Globe/Modern Curriculum Press.



Now turn to page 14 in *Poetry in Focus* and read “At Seventeen.”

## JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following ideas.

Do you find Janis Ian’s assessment of life “at seventeen” accurate or is it too bleak?

If you find that it’s true to life, add another stanza to the poem communicating your own experiences of growing up. Then try writing a poem that shows the brighter side of teenage life.



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## Activity 2: Less Is More



Poetry is really just prose with the wasted words cut out.

What do you think of this statement? In order to understand it, maybe you should actually test it out.



## JOURNAL

In your Journal you're going to use the following steps to actually write a poem.

Think of five sentences that describe a subject you know well – like your neighbourhood, your best friend, or your favourite sport or hobby. Yes, even hamburgers will do. As you write the sentences down, try to show why you feel strongly about your topic. For example, your taste for hamburgers might lead to the following:

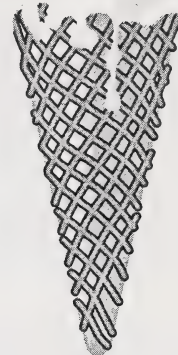


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I love fast-food restaurants. I love the charbroiled taste of burgers, the hovering aroma of fries dipped in grease. On the weekends all my friends are there. We don't have to worry about manners; we talk with our mouths full, eat with our fingers, gorge ourselves on ice cream and pop, and nobody tells us to clear out. It feels permanent, like a second home, or else like a party – except you don't have to clean up the dishes afterwards.

Now read through your sentences and circle the important words or phrases. Then arrange them on separate lines. Here's an example:

fast-food restaurants  
 charbroiled taste  
 burgers  
 hovering aroma of grease  
 friends  
 don't worry about manners  
 talk with mouths full  
 eat with fingers  
 second home  
 ice cream  
 party you don't have to clean up after



Work with these words. Try moving individual words around and see if you can make any interesting connections. Can you make a poem out of them? What would the title be? Do you need more words? fewer words? See what you can come up with. Your five sentences might end up looking suspiciously like poetry:

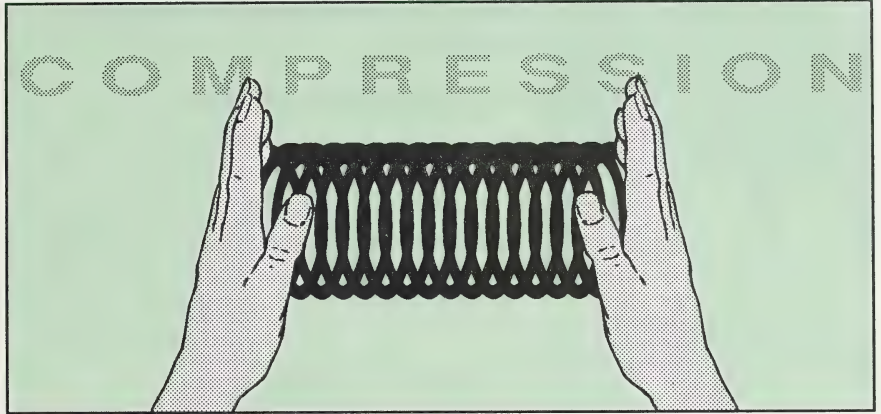
### Second Home

All my fast-food friends are there  
 hovering  
 in the charbroiled aroma of grease  
 talk with mouths full  
 burgers  
 eat with fingers  
 Party!  
 you don't clean up after  
 don't clear out after  
 a permanent dip

Here, the sentences have been cut down to the bare sensations; the sights and sounds of the restaurant have been mixed with the feelings of friendship.

After you've written your poem, describe how you feel about what you've created.

## Compression of Thought



**Compression:** in writing, the reduction of words, usually resulting in an intensification of meaning

This action of stripping down ideas to their bare essentials is called **compression**. “Less is more” could be the motto of most poets. Poets have great respect for their readers’ intelligence; they don’t want to tell them everything. They’d rather suggest possibilities and let the readers’ imaginations do the rest.

**Epithet:** a descriptive expression that points out a characteristic of a person or thing

Compression allows you to express your thoughts in as few words as possible. One way of doing this is to make use of epithets. An **epithet** is a concise descriptive expression that points out a characteristic of a person or thing. For example, the poet John Keats describes a character as the “bosom-friend [noun] of the maturing sun.” In another poem, he refers to “death-pale [adjective] warriors.” Another poet, Carl Sandburg, refers to the city of Chicago as “hog butcher” for the world and the city with “big shoulders.”





1. Suggest an epithet that will imaginatively describe each of the following concepts. Remember, it can be a noun or an adjective. Sample answers are provided for the first four words, but try to think of one of your own for each of them anyway.

a. **winter:** *death's friend winter*

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b. **Wayne Gretzky:** *hockey-ambassador Wayne Gretzky*

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c. **silence:** *mind-numbing silence*

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d. **music:** *ear-bending music*

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e. **summer:**

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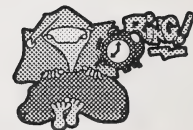
f. **rock and roll:**

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g. **sleep:**

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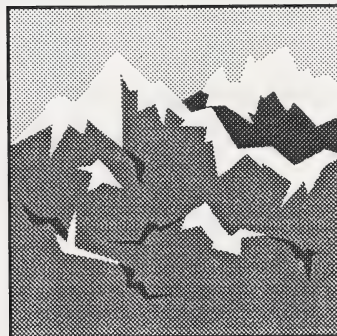
h. shopping mall:

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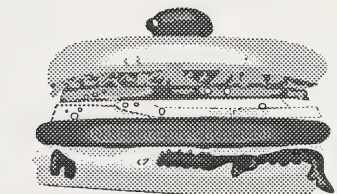
i. mountain:

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j. hamburger:

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Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Activity 2.



In *Poetry in Focus* there are many effective examples of compression. The poem you are about to read moves from a single specific incident to a general statement about people's lives. Turn to page 127 in *Poetry in Focus* and read the poem "Lanterns" by Andrew Suknaski.

## JOURNAL

In your Journal comment on the bleak situation and the broader idea the poet presents here. What is your response to his compressed narration of events?



Now complete the following two questions:

2. The poem offers us a few bare details. Imagine that you are a reporter for a television station or a newspaper. Write a news item recounting the story of the hired man's accidental death. Offer an explanation for what happened. Keep in mind what you learned about newswriting in Module 4. You may want to use the inverted-pyramid model.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Globe/Modern Curriculum Press for the adaptation of a question from *Poetry in Focus* by Cameron et al, page 136. Reprinted by permission of Globe/Modern Curriculum Press.



3. Why does the poet's bare description and use of simple language seem appropriate for the subject of this poem?

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Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Activity 2.

As you can see, the poet has taken a subject that could constitute a whole short story and compressed it into just a few lines. The exercise that's coming up will give you an opportunity to do the same.

### JOURNAL

In your Journal rewrite a fairy tale using the following process.



Imagine a fairy tale or any other well-known story. Think about what you would say if this anecdote were told aloud. Try writing it down, keeping in mind one important rule: **Each word can be used only once!** That's right! Even articles and prepositions must not appear twice. See how compressed (but varied!) language becomes when writers avoid repetition. Note, please, the paragraph you're now reading (present sentence included) contains no repeats.

Here's an example of the finished product:

### One Sad Case

Last week around noon, yours truly spied this humongous hard-boiled character sitting on a high brick wall. The wind blew violently; rain fell. Before anybody tried shouting "Look out" or "Bombs away," Humpty Dumpty, as he called himself, slip-slided head over heels, becoming an enormous yellow splat, staining our main sidewalk.

Just then, King Humbug, Lord High of Everything Which Isn't Nailed Down, happened by, with soldiers horsed, and spotted poor ol' "Dumpster." "Egad!" said His Highness. "Good followers! Attend yon dismal shattered shell. Glue! Stitch! Staple! Put that Extra Large together again!"

Alas! Luck was elsewhere. All these ponies, infantry, even twelve lords leaping, couldn't swing it. To conclude, Mister Egg Man tasted pretty fine scrambled. I kid you not. No yoke.



Write the story in your Journal. In a small group, read your story out loud. If you're by yourself, read it into a tape recorder. In Module 2, you honed your oral interpretation skills by reading ballads and children's stories aloud. Then in Module 3 you presented poetry orally. Remember the lessons you learned in both these modules about emphasis, pacing, and raising and lowering the pitch of your voice. Be lively; use gestures and facial expressions. After all, adults don't like to be bored any more than children do. Don't get so caught up in not repeating words that your reading becomes stilted. Make it sound as if this were the passage you would have written even if you could have repeated words! Afterwards, comment in your Journal on the audience's response to your presentation.





### Activity 3: Emotion Versus Fact



In Module 4 you studied newspapers. Newspapers live and die on facts. They explain them, analyse them, and even use them to entertain. You can understand then, that if a newspaper doesn't get the facts straight, readers won't trust it and will switch to a more reliable paper.

In poetry, feelings matter more than facts. Feeling is "the fact" of poetry. The more imaginatively the feelings that surround a subject are conveyed, the more effective a poem will be for the reader. A good poem will always rise above, or transcend, mere facts.

Compare the presentation of fact and emotion in the following excerpts. The first is a pilot's log and the second is an extract from the sonnet "High Flight" by John Gillespie Magee.

#### Solo Flight #1

I took off at 0600. Proceeded east through low cumulus cloud to 5000 feet. Weather calm. Speed 200 knots. Tail wind 30 knots. Practised turns and emergency manoeuvres, lowering altitude to 3000 feet. Returned to runway and landed at 0650.



## High Flight

O, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth  
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings.  
Sunward I've climbed and joined the tumbling mirth  
Of sun-split clouds – and done a hundred things  
You have not dreamed of – wheeled and soared and swung  
High in the sunlit silence. Hovering there,  
I've chased the shouting wind along and flung  
My eager craft through footless halls of air.

Both log and poem detail the pilot's flight, but which account seems more alive to you? Which one moves you the most? Which one makes you want to go out and actually fly?

A poet would say that facts alone give you only the external – or the shell – of life; a poem gives you the heart and soul.

### JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following idea.

Try a similar comparison. You might want to write about an incident you witnessed or were involved in; or you can write about a favourite sport or activity. Under the heading *Facts*, give a factual account of the situation. Under *Emotions*, think of all the feelings associated with the experience. What did you taste, touch, smell, hear, see – in other words, what did you experience through your senses? Write down your impressions in point form. Then see if you can make epithets out of these feelings.

Finally, see if you can turn the raw material of your descriptions into a poem. You may want to use it for a later assignment.



**JOURNAL**

In your Journal describe a time when you've been by yourself in a very quiet environment (like the library) and the feelings you had while you were there.



Now turn to page 20 in *Poetry in Focus* and read the poem “The Sound of Silence” by Paul Simon. Then answer the questions that follow:

What is the strongest emotion conveyed to you by the poem? Select two or three details from the poem that make you feel this way.

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Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 1: Activity 3.





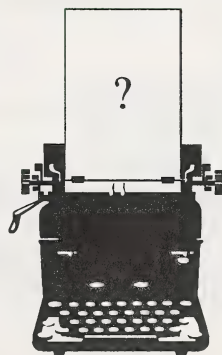
The poem suggests that the emotions you feel are common ones, experienced by everyone at various times. Imagine that the poet, Paul Simon, has asked you to add another stanza in the middle of the poem.

### JOURNAL

In your Journal write this stanza making sure it expresses the key emotion you identified in the preceding question.

## Activity 4: The Poet's Purpose

A newspaper's main purpose is to inform. On the other hand, narrative ballads, which you studied in Module 2, are primarily concerned with telling a story. They want to entertain you by using exciting incidents and startling twists.



Ballads, and all other poetry for that matter, do much more than just inform and entertain. They actually seek to enlighten the reader or listener. They communicate experiences of the world in such a way that the reader becomes more attuned to and aware of life – its complexities and its possibilities. If poetry sometimes seems difficult to understand, remember, it's simply mirroring life; and life certainly can be complicated.

## JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following idea.

Imagine that you have just thought of an absolutely amazing poem. Unfortunately, you forgot to write it down. Describe its purpose. What message about life would it communicate to its readers?

This may sound hard, but it isn't really. Just think about something you really want to say about life – something important that deserves to be communicated in such a poem.



Sometimes you may feel that your life has been ordinary and uninteresting, that other people have had far more exciting lives; they've seen more, done more, been more places.

Turn to page 16 in *Poetry in Focus* and see how Miriam Waddington copes with these feelings in the poem "Provincial." Then answer the following questions:



1. a. What do you think Miriam Waddington’s purpose was in writing “Provincial”?

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- b. What feeling or idea does she convey to you?

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Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Activity 4.

The poet uses simple language, yet in just sixty-five words she manages to convey many strong impressions of her childhood. Could you do the same and still communicate the feeling of “a full life” to the reader?

JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following idea.

Think about your childhood. What was it that made it uniquely yours? Try squeezing the most important impressions and feelings of your childhood into sixty-five words. Begin with the words “My childhood was. . .”

“Provincial” is a straightforward poem, so the poet’s purpose is easy enough to grasp. But in many poems the purpose is not so clear-cut and you must look for clues in individual words.



## JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following questions.

Have you ever become exhausted journeying from one place to another? Have you ever found yourself in physical danger from exposure to extreme weather conditions? How did you feel when the danger or exhaustion was over? What thoughts or feelings did you have for those who might still have been facing similar perils?



Now turn to page 21 in *Poetry in Focus* and read the poem “The Owl” by Edward Thomas. This poem expresses the feelings of someone who has narrowly escaped death from exhaustion and exposure and who, because of this close call, feels strongly for those who may not have been so lucky.



Think back to what you learned about symbols in Module 3. In order to convey as much meaning as possible in as few words as possible, poets make frequent use of symbols. In a complex poem a key symbol may carry the weight of many different meanings. Consider the word *owl* for example. Say it out loud. It’s a drawn-out sound, a bit like the wind; it also rhymes with *howl*. But does this have any significance?

In a group or by yourself discuss or think about the following questions. Write down your ideas if you want.

2. What do you know about owls? They’re birds, yes, but what kind of bird? What symbolic meanings have become associated with the owl over the centuries?

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3. Based on your answer to the preceding question, explain why you think the owl would suit the poet’s purpose better than, say, a duck would.

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The “wise owl” is a popular symbol in our society.

Compare your answers with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Activity 4.

As you can see, by exploring the significance of a single key word you gain a clearer understanding of the poet’s larger purpose in writing the poem. This larger purpose is connected to the idea, or theme, of the poem.

## Activity 5: Finding the Theme

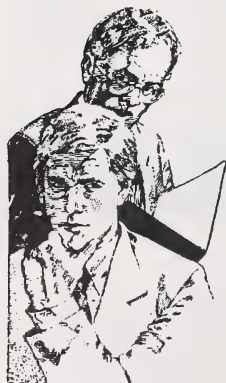


In Module 3 **theme** was defined as “the central idea or insight about life that emerges from a piece of literature.” Every poem is written about a particular topic. What the poem has to say about that topic is its theme.

It’s important to distinguish the topic or subject – the people, places, and events that a poem is about – from the theme, idea, or statement about life that is shown or implied by the topic.

In Module 3, you read the story “Penny in the Dust” about a boy’s relationship with his father. The poem “Cats in the Cradle” also deals with a father-son relationship, but with different results.

Turn to page 52 in *Poetry in Focus* and read “Cats in the Cradle” by Harry and Sandy Chapin. Then answer the following questions:



1. What is the subject, or topic, of this poem?

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2. The poem appears to be saying something about relationships. What do you think the idea, or theme, of this poem is?

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Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Activity 5.

### JOURNAL

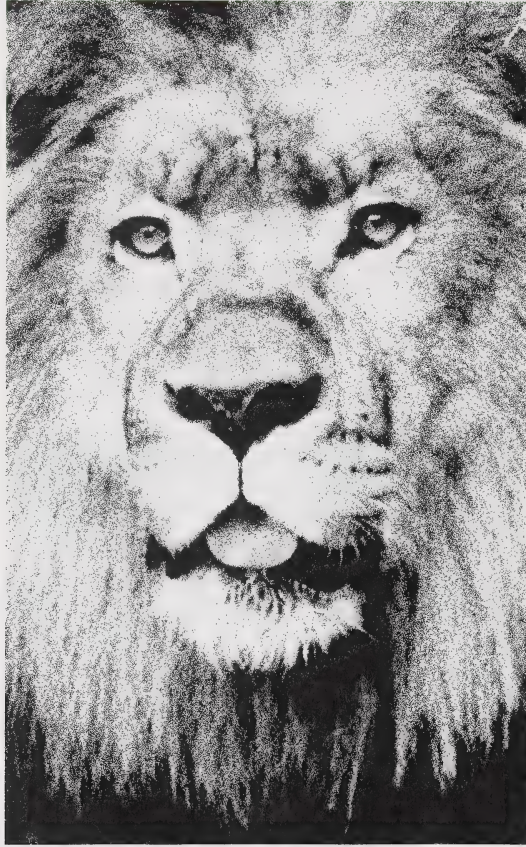
In your Journal respond to the following idea.

Do you think either the poem “Cats in the Cradle” or the story “Penny in the Dust” reflects the reality of most parent-child relationships? If you think neither one does, then explain what you think a realistic parent-child relationship is or should be.

In trying to understand the theme of a poem it’s often a good idea to relate the subject to your own experience. For example, have you ever been disappointed upon seeing an animal at the zoo? What disappointed you? Did you find the disappointment was because of the animal itself or because of your own expectations?

Turn to page 22 in *Poetry in Focus* and read the poem “Riverdale Lion” by John Robert Colombo.





3. In this poem the adults at the zoo are disappointed in the lion; they don't seem to realize that it is as Canadian as they are. This suggests that the people themselves are just as disappointing as the lion, if not more so. From your understanding of the poem, what makes these people disappointing?

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Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 1: Activity 5.

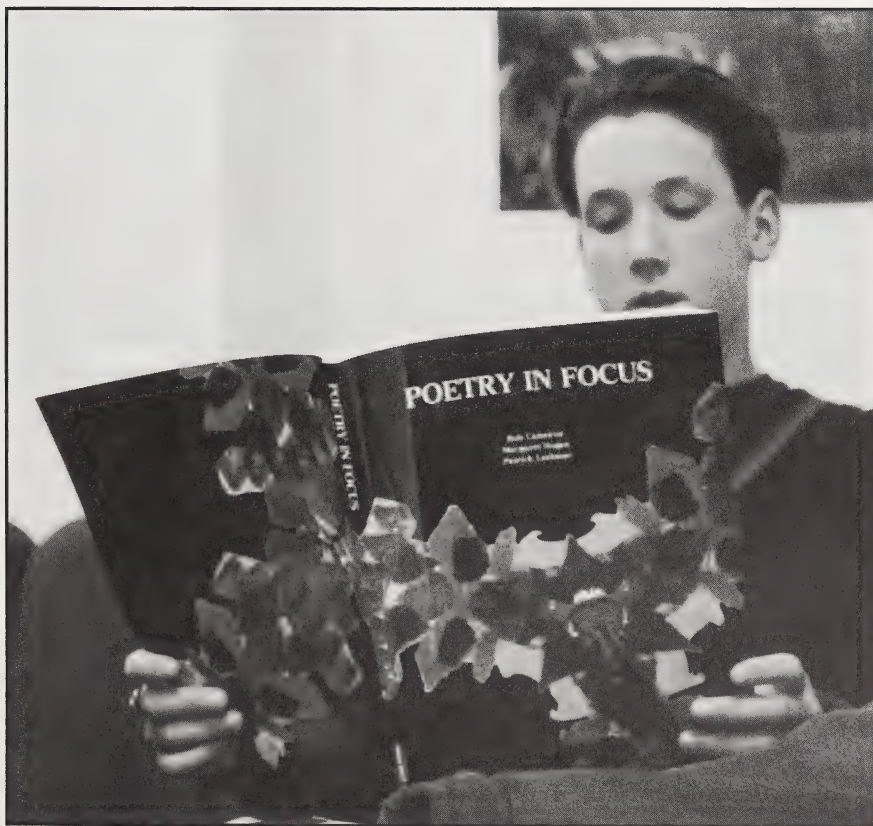
## JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following question by writing a description in either poetry or prose.

If the lion in this poem were as “Canadian” as you are, or in the same way that you are, what sort of animal would it be?

**Anthology:** a collection of literary selections

At the end of this section your assignment will be to compile a mini-**anthology** of three poems on the same general topic. Now is a good time to start browsing through the textbook *Poetry in Focus* in search of poems you like on a particular topic. You may also want to look at other poetry texts. Track some down in the poetry section of your nearest library.





For your assignment you'll introduce the overall general topic of your anthology and then write a short paragraph for each poem, linking the theme of that poem to the topic of your anthology.



For example, assume you've chosen the topic *love*. Turn to page 102 in *Poetry in Focus* and read "Those Winter Sundays" by Robert Hayden and "The Taxi" by Amy Lowell.



Each of these poems is about love. Each expresses love but at the same time looks at loneliness. Despite these similarities, though, each poem conveys a different message about love. It's your job to point out both the similarities and differences in the themes of the poems you choose. As you answer the following questions, think about how these two particular poems differ.

4. In "The Taxi" the poet compares her love to the outside world. What does she realize?

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5. The poet supports her point by using many words and phrases that suggest that the world or universe is a hostile place. List these words and phrases here.

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6. In “Those Winter Sundays” the poet looks back at his childhood.

a. What does he realize now that he didn’t realize then?

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b. Why do you think he didn’t realize this as a child?

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7. Again, in “Those Winter Sundays,” there are words and phrases that suggest that the world is a hostile place. List them if you can.

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Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Activity 5.

The words you listed in Questions 5 and 7 are important because they provide supporting evidence for any conclusions you make about the themes of the poems. In trying to connect one poem to the other under the general topic of love, you might write the following:

“The Taxi” depicts love as a shelter against a lonely, hostile world. It shows that love gives meaning to life. However, in “Those Winter Sundays” love is seen as a responsibility, frequently requiring lonely sacrifices.

You may come up with a different conclusion based on what you see in the poems.

Now you’ll try two more poems. Both of them deal with journeys. Again, look for the similarities and differences between their messages.

## JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following ideas.

Why do you think travel is so popular? Think back to a trip you've taken that you enjoyed. What made it so enjoyable? As the trip came to an end, what made you the most unhappy?



Turn to page 19 in *Poetry in Focus* and read "Travel" by Edna St. Vincent Millay. Then read "The Long Hill" by Sara Teasdale on page 22.



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8. Why do you think the person in "Travel" wants to go somewhere? Think of yourself: Would you like to go anywhere? Why?

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9. In “The Long Hill” why didn’t the poet realize when she reached the crest?

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10. Suppose you change your topic to the “journey of life.” How might this affect your answers to Questions 8 and 9?

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11. In two to four sentences connect the two poems under the theme “Life is a journey.”

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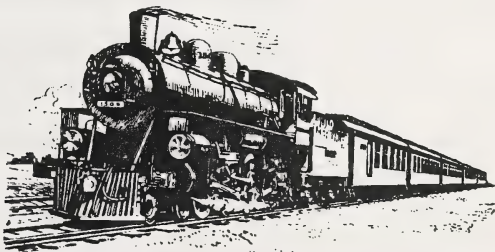
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Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Activity 5.

## Follow-up Activities

If you found the activities difficult, you should complete the Extra Help. If you understand the concepts clearly, you should complete the Enrichment.

### Extra Help

Students sometimes have trouble appreciating just what poetry is. To put it simply, poets are writers who strive to maximize the impact of what they say while at the same time minimizing the number of words they use to say it. Conciseness is the essence of poetry; because of it, meaning is intensified..

1. Bearing this in mind, do **either** Question a **or** Question b.

Are you a person who has difficulty writing poetry? If you are, this exercise may help you to think “poetically.”

#### a. Writing a Five-Line Poem

The following five steps each represent one line of a poem you’re about to create. Follow these steps, writing your own poem in the space provided.

**Step 1:** Write down a noun (person, place, thing, or quality).

**Step 2:** Write two adjectives (words that describe the noun). Separate the two adjectives by a comma.

**Step 3:** Write three verbs that tell what the noun does. Separate the verbs by commas.

**Step 4:** Write a thought about the noun. A short phrase will do.

**Step 5:** Repeat the word you wrote on the first line, or write down a synonym or some other related word.

By now you should have a full-fledged poem. Are you happy with it?

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**b. Writing an Eight-Line Poem**

Each of the following eight steps represents one line of a poem you'll create. Follow the steps and write your poem in the space provided.



**Step 1:** Describe the most beautiful animal you can think of – but don't name the animal. A short phrase or description will do.

**Step 2:** Describe what you feel like inside when you're very happy.

**Step 3:** Describe the colour that you like best.

**Step 4:** Describe the odour of something very pleasant.

**Step 5:** Describe a meadow, a hillside, a seashore, or some other agreeable scene. In one line, try to tell how this scene looks.

**Step 6:** Describe the sound of something you find very melodious and peaceful.

**Step 7:** Describe a taste or texture that you really like. You might wish to compare the taste or texture to something else.

**Step 8:** Describe a scene of love and caring or some other act of peacefulness.

Now you've created a poem! Read it over. Does it seem like a poem? Are you surprised?<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Globe/Modern Curriculum Press for the exercise "Writing a Poem" from the *Teacher's Guide to Poetry in Focus* by Cameron et al, page 103. Reprinted by permission of Globe/Modern Curriculum Press.





2. By now, you should be browsing through the selections in *Poetry in Focus* looking for poems for the mini-anthology you'll be creating for your Section 1 Assignment.

When you've found three poems you want to use, go through the following checklist for each poem.



- a. The title will often give you a clue to a poem's meaning. Why do you think the author chose this particular title?

**Poem 1:**

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**Poem 2:**

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**Poem 3:**

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- b. What is the mood of the poem? Is it serious or humorous, dark or light, full of foreboding or matter-of-fact? What is the main emotion the poet is trying to convey?

**Poem 1:**

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**Poem 2:**

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**Poem 3:**

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- c. What is the topic of this poem?

**Poem 1:**

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**Poem 2:**

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**Poem 3:**

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- d. Does this poem use words that are used in either of the other poems? If so, make a list of these words.

**Poem 1:**

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**Poem 2:**

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**Poem 3:**

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- e. Can you state the theme of the poem in one sentence?

**Poem 1:**

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**Poem 2:**

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**Poem 3:**

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Compare your answers for all three poems. What similarities do you find between answers? What do you make of these similarities? What about the differences? How do they broaden your understanding of the theme of your anthology?

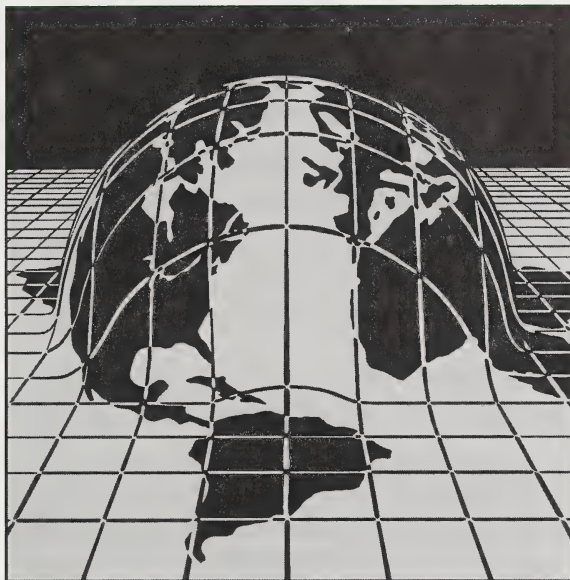
Compare your ideas with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Extra Help.

### Enrichment

Do **one or both** of the following questions:

1. *Dadaism* is a movement that developed in the arts after World War I. Dadaists were horrified at the waste of lives in the war and believed that society needed to be changed completely. Since art was a reflection of society, it too needed to be changed. According to the Dadaists, the best way to change art was to throw out all the rules.





The act of creation itself was rejected as obsolete. “No more masterpieces!” they declared. Life had proven itself to be as senseless and random as the movement of atoms, so art should be random, too. In poetry, for example, this meant that poets shouldn’t think about what they were going to write; they should just write, guided by their intuition or subconscious impulses. The Dadaists had no use for form either. Rhymes, metre, stanzas were all too

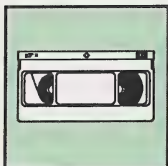
artificial, too conscious. “Just do it” could have been their motto. Even words were suspect. A typical Dadaist “poem” mixed multiple voices, words, moans, grunts, chants, sounds, and ordinary conversation. Of course, no poem ever sounded the same twice.

The Dadaists believed that there was no such thing as a “great” poem. It was just a random mixing of sounds or words. It could be remixed into something equally as great, and who could say otherwise, since Dadaists didn’t believe in the old rules for judging a poem anyway.

Now is your chance to be a Dadaist. Find a favourite short poem of yours. Write out the poem on a piece of paper and then cut out each word. Fold each word so you can’t see it and place it in a hat or box. Take the words out one at a time, and arrange them in the order that they appear. The first word you choose will be the starting word of your new poem and then each new word you select will follow. When you’re finished, look at your new poem carefully, first right side up, then sideways, then upside down. Can you see the possibilities? Ask a partner for help. Perhaps you can make your poem into a choral reading. Go on, see if you have what it takes to be a Dadaist. Remember, one important characteristic of the Dadaists was their sense of humour.

2. In junior high school students are often asked to make collages about various topics. You'll make a collage now that goes beyond simply representing a general topic because you'll actually have to make a statement of theme. For example, if your topic is beauty, it would be very easy to look through fashion and movie magazines and find pictures of beautiful people. But what if your theme is "Our society's obsession with beauty turns people into objects"? How would you show that through pictures? You might, for example, combine a picture of a lifeless-looking fashion model with pictures of a Halloween mask, a doll, and a broken mirror. What if you choose a theme like "Don't give in to limits"? What pictures would you use? A balloon soaring? a person climbing a mountain? someone struggling to read? a person sitting shyly in a corner?

On your own paper create a collage conveying a statement of theme of your choice. Underneath the collage explain its theme in words.



If you have access to a video camera, you might want to create a video collage. For example, suppose you wanted to convey the theme, "The world is moving too quickly." You could combine pictures of people rushing to work, cars driving through an intersection, people working, joggers passing by, and so on. Try to convey your theme using images alone or, if you want, add some background music.



Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Enrichment.

## Conclusion

In this section you've examined some of the reasons for people liking and disliking poetry so that you can have a better understanding of the purposes and pleasures of writing and reading poetry. You've also come to realize that poetry involves the compression of language to the essential feelings and thoughts. As well, you've had the chance to demonstrate your understanding of theme in several different poems that you've studied. You're now ready to move on to other poetical concepts.

### ASSIGNMENT

In your Assignment Booklet complete the assignment(s) for this section.



# SECTION 2



# THE LANGUAGE OF POETRY



Poetry, as you learned in Section 1, suggests a great deal with as few words as possible. “Less is more” is the poet’s motto. But to appreciate all the possibilities of a poem, it’s necessary for you to understand the language of poetry – the techniques that poets use to convey their themes to the reader.

By reading a variety of poems in this section, you’ll have the chance to examine some of the techniques that poets use to convey the ideas of their poetry. These techniques include the use of imagery, rhythm, diction, inference, and figurative language, as well as form and content. You’ll also try your hand at free verse and other “modern” forms of poetry. At the end of the section you’ll be expected to submit a collection of your poems as well as a good copy of one of your Journal responses.

**Activity 1: Poetry Versus Prose**

Okay, Eva, how do you tell the difference between a poem and a piece of prose?



Not all poems rhyme.

Easy. A poem rhymes.



Rhythm?

Yeah, but they sound like poems. More of a beat, y'know.



Sure. And a poem has symbols and all that other stuff that's supposed to confuse you.



1. Help Eva out. Can you think of any other differences between poetry and prose? In a small group or by yourself, discuss or think about the differences between poetry and prose. Write your findings in the space provided.

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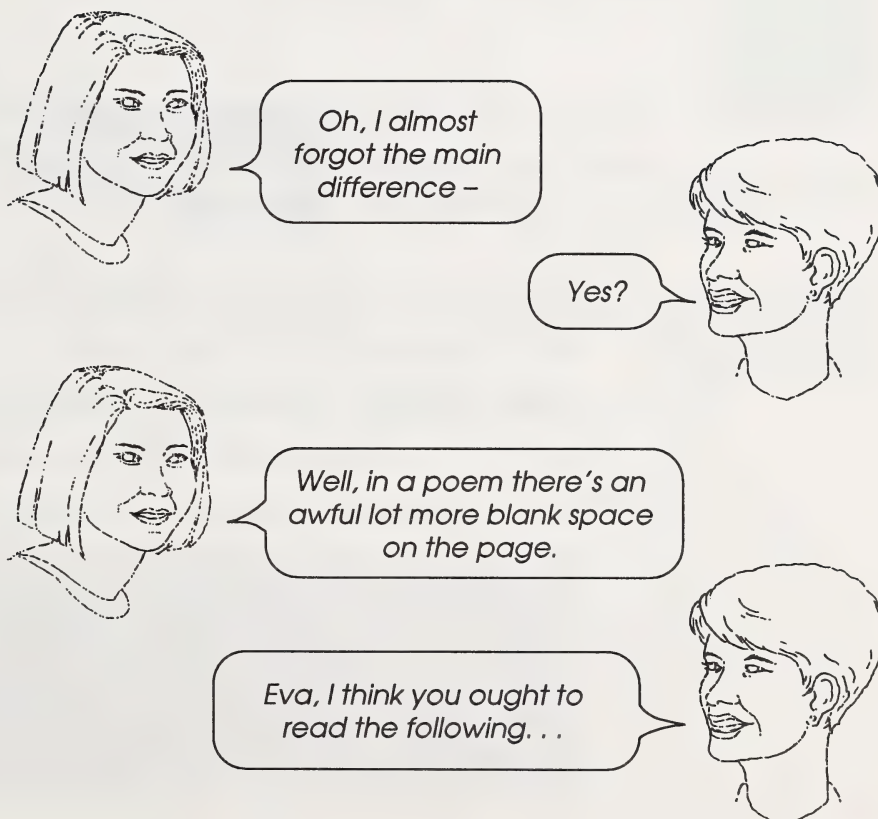


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Compare your ideas with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Activity 1.







Turn to page 15 in *Poetry in Focus*. Read the first two paragraphs on the differences between prose and poetry. The second paragraph discusses the external signs that help you identify a poem.

After you've read these two paragraphs, turn to pages 90 and 91. Read the four limericks that appear on these pages. Then answer the following question:

- How do these poems show the characteristics of poetry as described in the paragraphs you read on page 91?

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Now go back to page 15 in *Poetry in Focus* and read the third paragraph. It concerns rhythm.



**Rhythm:** in language, the sound pattern created by the speed and flow of stressed and unstressed syllables

**Rhythm** is also very important in music. People often refer to rhythm in music as “the beat.”

### JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following idea.

If you have a collection of tapes, records, or CDs, choose two pieces of music with different beats that you enjoy. Play each piece and concentrate on the rhythm, not the words.

Describe the rhythm of each piece of music. As you listen, what pictures does it bring to mind? Describe these images.



In a poem, the rhythm of the lines becomes more apparent when you read it aloud.

Turn to page 48 in *Poetry in Focus* and read over the first stanza of “The Highwayman” by Alfred Noyes. You’ll remember this poem from Module 2. Then turn to page 130 and read the first eleven lines of “Mountain Lion” by D.H. Lawrence.

3. In a small group or by yourself read the excerpts aloud and then discuss or think about the differences in the rhythms of the two poems.

a. In your own words how would you describe the rhythm of “The Highwayman”?

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b. How would you describe the rhythm of “Mountain Lion”?

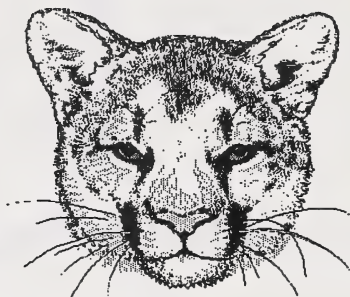
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Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Activity 1.

Sometimes the rhythm of a poem is so strong that it becomes just as important as the meaning of the words. A good example is the excerpt from the poem that follows – “The Congo,” by Vachel Lindsay. This poem is best appreciated read aloud by a group of voices. In a small group read the poem silently at first. Then create a choral reading. You may want everybody to say certain lines, two or three people to say others, and only a single voice to say still others. Try to use the full range of your voice: high and low, loud and soft.





In this poem you're trying to create the popular impression Americans and Europeans had of deepest, darkest Africa around the turn of the century – that it was a place of primitive power, and mystery – a place of exotic savages, brutal slave traders, and wicked fortune seekers. Try to create suitably eerie effects with your voices. Have some fun; leave your inhibitions at the door. Add in any sound effects you think may help. Then read the finished product into a tape recorder. Record it even if you're by yourself. See if you're captured by the driving, chanting rhythms of "The Congo."

### The Congo

Barrel-house kings, with feet unstable,  
 Sagged and reeled and pounded on the table,  
 Beat an empty barrel with a handle of a broom,  
 Hard as they were able,  
 Boom, boom, BOOM,  
 With a silk umbrella and the handle of a broom,  
 Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, BOOM.  
 Then I had religion, THEN I had a vision.  
 I could not turn from their revel in derision.  
 THEN I SAW THE CONGO, CREEPING THROUGH THE BLACK,  
 CUTTING THROUGH THE FOREST WITH A GOLDEN TRACK.  
 Then along that riverbank  
 A thousand miles  
 Tattooed cannibals danced in files;  
 Then I heard the boom of the blood-lust song  
 And a thigh-bone beating on a tin-pan gong.  
 And "BLOOD" screamed the whistles and the fifes of the  
 warriors,  
 "BLOOD" screamed the skull-faced, lean witchdoctors,  
 "Whirl ye the deadly voo-doo rattle,  
 Harry the uplands,  
 Steal all the cattle,  
 Rattle-rattle, rattle-rattle,  
 Bing.  
 Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, BOOM,"  
 A roaring, epic, rag-time tune  
 From the mouth of the Congo  
 To the Mountains of the Moon.<sup>1</sup>

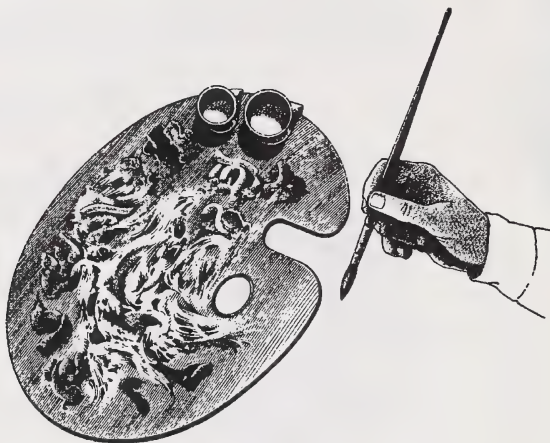


<sup>1</sup> W.W. Norton & Company Inc. for the excerpt from the poem "The Congo" by Vachel Lindsay from "The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry," page 260. Reprinted by permission of W.W. Norton and Company Inc.





Next, return to page 15 in *Poetry in Focus* and read the last paragraph – on imagery – something you studied in Module 3. *Imagery*, you'll recall, refers to words used to paint pictures or create sensations. It appeals primarily to the sense of sight – creating visual images in the reader's mind.



Listen again to the two pieces of music you chose for the Journal activity earlier. As you listen, ask yourself if there's anything in them that appeals to your sense of taste, touch, or smell. A thumping bass might make your feet twitch. A flute solo might bring back the smell of mountain pines in the morning. The sound of drumsticks on cymbals might recall the sounds and smells of hamburgers sizzling on a grill. Music can take you back to the place where you first heard the song; perhaps you were lying on the beach with the sand against your skin, the sun's warmth on your face, the smell of salt all around, the sound of waves lulling you to sleep.



## JOURNAL

In your Journal, describe the effect a favourite piece of music has on all your senses.

All poems make visual appeals to the reader, but the ones you're about to read appeal strongly to the other senses as well.

Turn to page 15 in *Poetry in Focus* and read "The Argument for Ascending" by Sid Marty. Then read "Solitude" by Archibald Lampman on page 113. When you're finished, answer the following questions:



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4. Aside from sight, which sense is Sid Marty appealing to most in "The Argument for Ascending"? Give examples of the particular images he uses.

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5. Aside from sight, which sense does Archibald Lampman appeal to most in “Solitude”? Give examples of the imagery he uses.

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Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Activity 1.

Imagery gives immediacy to a poem; it draws you into the poet's world, giving you a closeness that makes you feel as if you're right there. We can feel what it's like to be climbing a mountain with Sid Marty, and we can sit with Archibald Lampman and experience the silence of the surrounding forest. In your own poetry, see if you can write lines that appeal to the senses in the same powerful way.

## Activity 2: Figurative Meaning



**Raymond:** Ms. Grotowski, there's one thing that's been puzzling me. When we started poetry, you said we should go beyond the literal and look for the "figurative possibility."

**Ms. Grotowski:** That's right.

**Raymond:** But what does that mean?

**Ms. Grotowski:** **Literal meaning** is the actual meaning of a word or a phrase. It's the meaning that sits there on the page and stares back at you. For example, a rose is a flower which comes in a variety of colours and looks and smells nice.

**Raymond:** Okay. And what about "figurative"?

**Ms. Grotowski:** Well, if you suddenly say that your girlfriend is like a rose, you've opened up a three-ring circus of **figurative meanings**. You're saying this rose is more than a flower; it has possibilities beyond itself – for example, love, beauty, truth. When you look for the figurative significance of the poem, you're encouraging the words to leap off the page and reconnect in new ways.

**Raymond:** A circus, eh?



**Literal meaning:** the actual meaning of a word

**Figurative meaning:** the suggested or associated meaning of a word



## The Circus of Figurative Language

**Figure of speech:** an expression that makes use of figurative language – for example, simile, metaphor, and personification



Ladies and gentlemen, in the centre ring I present to you the Flying Figuratives, the greatest family of trapeze artists and **figures of speech** the world of poetry has ever seen. Let me introduce some of them to you.

First there is **Simile**, the comparison between two unlike things using the words "like" or "as."

Thank you, Simile. Next there is **Metaphor**, who is the direct comparison between two unlike things without using the words "like" or "as" or "than."

I am the prince of aerialists, the eagle of jumpers. Simile is like a straight line in the air, but I am a mountain.



When I jump, I soar like an eagle, I dance like the sun: I am as majestic as the world in spring.

The ropes always appreciate my skill in landing. They would never let go of me. I am so light even the air steps aside to let me pass.

**Personification:** the giving of human qualities to animals, ideas, or inanimate objects

Don't forget **Personification**. She has an important role too. She gives human qualities to inanimate objects. Things that are not human are made to be like people when she does her act.

Watch me, for at the peak of my ascent, I will pause and scan the entire world. And I will remain there, held aloft by the waves of applause beneath me.



**Hyperbole** thinks he is the entire act; he's always trying to hog the limelight. He can't open his mouth without intentionally exaggerating.

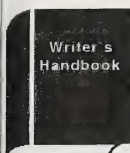
**Hyperbole:** the use of exaggeration for emphasis to create a serious or humorous effect

I wouldn't call being a trapeze artist exciting or dangerous; let's just say it's a touch less humdrum than the usual nine-to-five. Knowing that the slightest error in judgment will result in sudden death does add a bit of tension to the job, but then every occupation has its drawbacks.

**Understatement:** the representation of something as less than it is, often for humorous effect

**Understatement** doesn't care much for Hyperbole. He prefers to downplay his own comments. In fact, Understatement usually says less than what he actually means.





Now turn to the poems in Chapter 3 (pages 19 and 20) in *Poetry in Focus*. You've already read some of them but read them again and then answer the following questions:

In a group or by yourself identify examples of figurative language in the poems you've just read. Find at least two examples of each type listed below. You can also turn to your handbook for additional information about figures of speech.

1. **simile:**

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2. **metaphor:**

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3. **personification:**

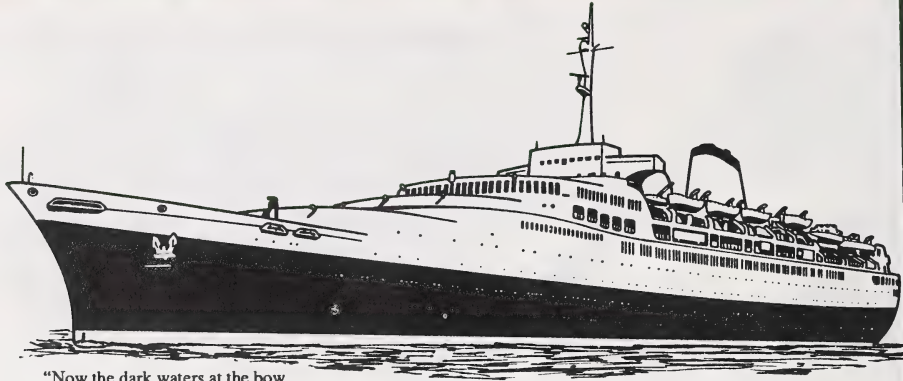
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Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Activity 2.



"Now the dark waters at the bow  
fold back, like earth against the plow;"

### JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following ideas.

Which poem do you like best in Chapter 3? How do figures of speech add to your appreciation of the poem? Look at the poems you've written so far in this module and on your own. Can any of them be improved by a figure of speech or two?

## Activity 3: Making Inferences



**Krishnie:** Ms. Grotowski, you know what I can't figure out about writers? If they have something to say, why not just say it? Why beat around the bush?

**Ms. Grotowski:** In other words, why not make a speech or write a message on a poster?

**Krishnie:** It'd be faster.

**Ms. Grotowski:** But would it be artistic? Remember, one of the purposes of art is to entertain. Suppose I wanted to convey this message: Many Canadians cheat on their taxes. Is that entertaining?



**Krishnie:** Of course not. I don't pay taxes.

**Ms. Grotowski:** But if I were an artist, I'd try to present the idea in a way that even you could find entertaining; and I'd allow you to draw your own conclusions. For example, I might draw a cartoon like this one:



*Imply: suggest a meaning indirectly*

**Ms. Grotowski:** As an artist, I'd **imply** or suggest my meaning by placing details in the picture that would lead to the conclusion that many Canadians cheat on their taxes.

**Krishnie:** Do they really?

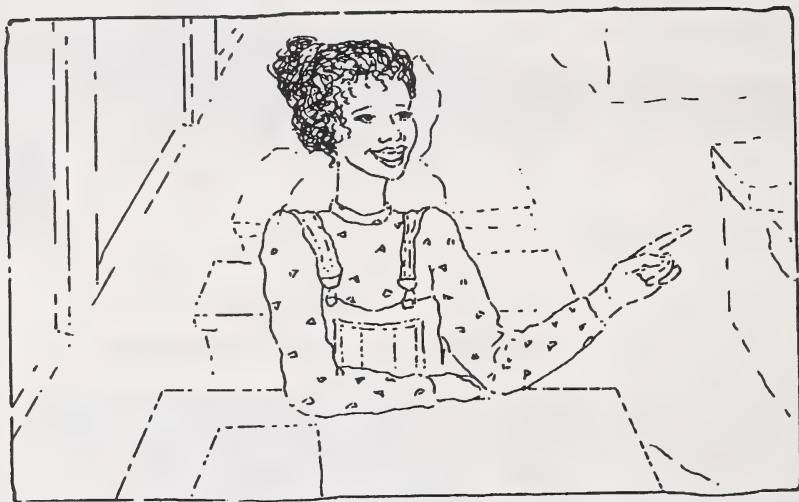
<sup>1</sup> Alberta Education for the cartoon from the January 1984 English 33 Diploma Exam Part A. Reprinted by permission of Alberta Education.



**Ms. Grotowski:** I have no idea. But I'd be implying it in this cartoon.

**Krishnie:** Well, let me take a look. You've got a beaver – a symbol of Canada, right? Okay, that's got to be the tax officer.

**Ms. Grotowski:** How do you know?



**Krishnie:** Well, it says Revenue Canada on the desk. And there's a tax return in its hand.

**Ms. Grotowski:** What about the people?

**Krishnie:** Well, one looks like a farmer, or somebody who works outdoors, because of the overalls and baseball cap. Then there are two people who probably work in some kind of office or school, and a nurse. So these are typical working people from all kinds of jobs, right?

**Ms. Grotowski:** How do they look?

**Krishnie:** Pretty tense. Two of them have little trembly lines around their heads as if they're afraid of something. Two are also holding tax returns, so they must be worried about them – because they've been cheating.

**Ms. Grotowski:** How do you know they're cheating?

**Krishnie:** Well, the noses: they're straight out of "Pinocchio." And one guy has his fingers crossed behind his back which means he knows he's lying.



**Ms. Grotowski:** What about the halo?

**Krishnie:** Uh, he's trying to look like an angel, but he doesn't look too convincing. So, Ms. Grotowski, what does all this mean?

**Ms. Grotowski:** It means you've looked at all the details in the picture, you've added them all up, and you've **inferred** – or made an **inference** – about the meaning of the picture.

*Infer: draw a conclusion  
based on evidence*

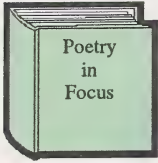
*Inference: a conclusion  
based on evidence*

**Krishnie:** And that meaning is that most Canadians cheat on their taxes.

**Ms. Grotowski:** The artist implied the meaning, and you inferred it by adding up all the details.

**Krishnie:** So writers imply and students infer. Is that it? I'd still rather be told.

**Ms. Grotowski:** Literature isn't that clearcut. It's about possibilities – making up your own mind and finding the evidence to back up your point of view.



1. Now turn to page 68 in *Poetry in Focus*. Look at the picture of the open door. Describe the mood of this picture. Are you being invited in? Support your inferences with at least two details from the picture.

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2. Now look at the hand at the bottom of page 69 of *Poetry in Focus*. What do you think is going on in this picture? Again, support your inference with at least two details from the picture.

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Compare your ideas with the ones in the Appendix, Section 2: Activity 3.

**JOURNAL**

Look at the picture below and then use the suggestions that follow to respond to it in your Journal.



1

Explain what might have been happening just before the scene that was drawn took place. Then in your Journal, draw your own picture. As in any work of art, the meaning will be implied by the details you include. You might want to show the picture to a friend; see if the friend can infer a meaning for the picture from the details in it. Keep the drawing in your Journal.

<sup>1</sup> Noah Gellner for the drawing he did in 1991 while a student at Strathcona Composite High School in Edmonton, Alberta. Reprinted by permission of Noah Gellner.



In order to understand a poem, you must look at the details included by the poet and draw inferences from them.

### JOURNAL

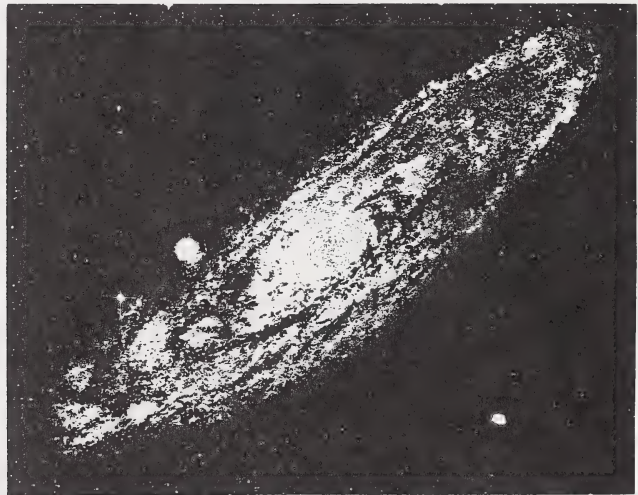
In your Journal consider the following quote and then respond to the questions.

Some things should never be explained. They should just be enjoyed.

Can you think of something you enjoy that was almost ruined for you by too much explanation and discussion? What was nearly lost for you in the process?



Turn to page 23 in *Poetry in Focus* and read the poem “When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer” by Walt Whitman. Then answer the following questions:



3. **Details:** What in the astronomer’s lecture leads the poet to become “tired and sick”?

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4. **Inference:** What is the lesson the poet learns from his encounter with astronomy?

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The permanence of stars is reassuring to people. People tend to take comfort in the familiar objects of nature and often feel threatened if what is familiar to them changes or moves on like the birds of autumn.

Turn now to page 118 in *Poetry in Focus* and read the poem “Wild Swans” by Edna St. Vincent Millay. Then answer the question that follows.



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5. The wild swans are flying over the poet's house. Compare the poet's life with the life of the swans and, based on these details, make an inference: Why do you think the woman wants the wild swans to return?

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Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Activity 3.

It's impossible to read a work of literature without drawing inferences from the details you read. In this way literature is like life: people spend their days drawing inferences from the experiences they have. And just as inferences drawn in life are backed up by experience and observation, an inference drawn in literature must be backed up by supporting detail. This is crucial in order to learn from and truly appreciate both life and literature.

#### Activity 4: Form and Content





**Ms. Grotowski:** What do you think of when I talk about **form** and **content**?  
**Yvonne?**

**Yvonne:** I think of more definitions that I won't be able to remember on the next test.

**Ms. Grotowski:** Form and content aren't just definitions, Yvonne. They're life. They're what separate the hamburger from the wrapper, the milkshake from the cup. Look around you; everything is made up of matter, or content – you, the desk, the chair. But how do I know where you stop and the chair starts?

**Yvonne:** Try jabbing with a pin. If you hear an "ouch," it's me.



**Ms. Grotowski:** Your body has a shape; that's form. The chair has four legs; that's form. It's form that defines us, that separates your content from the rest of the universe.

**Yvonne:** Oh no. Does this mean that I'm a poem?

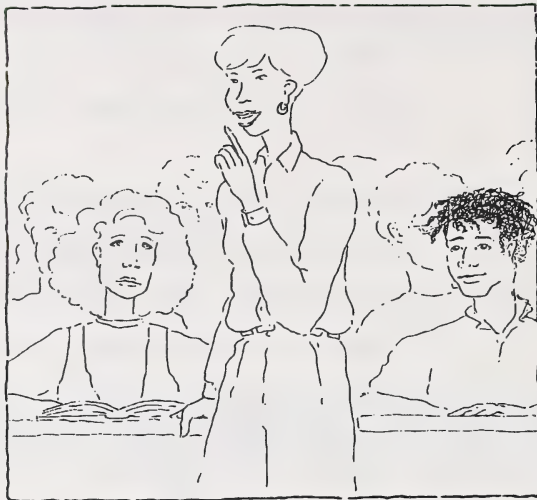
**Ms. Grotowski:** Sure: why not? Haven't you always wanted to turn your life into a work of art?

**Yvonne:** Just don't ask me to talk in rhymes.

**Ms. Grotowski:** No, I see you more as a work in free verse – soaring around in all directions – breaking the boundaries of the page.

**Yvonne:** Is that good?





**Ms. Grotowski:** Have you ever heard of the expression, “If the shoe fits”? A good poet will always fit the form to the content. For example, if you want to tell a simple, colourful, action-packed story to a group of listeners, what form would you probably choose for your poem?

**Yvonne:** A ballad?

**Ms. Grotowski:** Exactly. A ballad would probably be fun. How about if you wanted to tell a quick, funny story?

**Yvonne:** Uh, a limerick?

**Ms. Grotowski:** How about if you wanted to make a formal declaration of love to a woman?

**Yvonne:** You mean, “How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.” I always hated that poem. What do you call those things?

**Ms. Grotowski:** A sonnet. It’s a very formal poem with a complex rhyme scheme. In a sonnet it would be hard to be casual.

**Yvonne:** So what sort of form should a poem have?

**Ms. Grotowski:** Good question. Ask a hundred poets and you’ll get a thousand different answers.

The Changing Forms of Poetry

Poetry used to be governed by a number of strict forms; for example, there were sonnets, odes, elegies, epics. Many modern poets find these forms old-fashioned; they are too formal and restrictive to fully express the poet’s impressions.

Free Verse

*Free verse: poetry in which a poem generates its own rules of form*

In a way, the most popular form in our century isn’t really a form at all. **Free verse** is just what its name implies. Poets are free to make their own rules, which often means as few rules as possible. For example

Why should each line of poetry begin at the  
left-hand margin?  
Why can’t one line have ten words and the next  
two?  
Do your eyes always have to read a line from left  
to  
right?  
\*\*And, what? about: punctuation! Why cant the words float  
freely on the page in any old way you like  
after all poetry is freedom right? it  
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In other words, modern poetry challenges our basic expectations of what a poem should be. Here is a short but challenging example:

1. Is the following poem a one-, two-, or three-line poem? The only way to find out is to read it aloud. Can you make sense of it?

### Death and Life

cur f w d dis and p  
A sed iend rought eath ease ain.  
bles fr b br and ag

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2. In a group or by yourself skim over the free-verse poems in Chapter 22 of *Poetry in Focus*. Discuss or think about the differences you see between the “form” of these free-verse poems and the form of so-called old-fashioned poems such as ballads or sonnets. Write your findings here.

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Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Activity 4.

A common question about free-verse poetry is “How do free-verse poets know where to end each line?” Sometimes the lines look completely haphazard, but upon closer examination, you’ll find that poets carefully arrange words in ways that will guide you in your reading.

Now turn to page 131 in *Poetry in Focus* and read aloud the free-verse poem “The Diver” by W.W.E. Ross.



In free verse the arrangement of the lines suggests the rhythm of the poem. Usually the poet wants you to pause at the end of each line. Longer lines are read with a quicker, more flowing rhythm. A short line emphasizes a key description or idea because the reader is made to slow down, pause, and read each word carefully. Generally, people read too quickly.

In “The Diver,” the poet wants you to slow down and savour the possibilities of each word. For example, “Down” has a line all to itself. Take a deep breath and say the word. Stretch out the “ow” sound. Let your voice slide into a rich bass note. With your voice can you convey the feeling of a descent into the unknown? Later there is a quickening of pace, as the diver encounters “Things hostile”:

You cannot stay here, they seem to say;  
The rocks, slime-covered, the undulating  
Fronds of weeds—



Here, the poet wants a faster, sharper rhythm to convey a sudden sense of urgency – of possible danger. Read the lines and see if you can create that effect.

From these examples, it should be apparent that free-verse poets want you to read their poems aloud. Without an oral interpretation the poems don’t achieve their full impact.

Select a poem from Chapter 22 of *Poetry in Focus*. Present an excerpt from that poem orally either on tape or to a small group. Try speaking the lines the way the poet has arranged them. Does reading the excerpt aloud bring out the poem’s meaning for you?



## JOURNAL

In your Journal, take one of the poems you've written and shape it into free verse. Use the following suggestions to aid you.

Can you easily apply some of the characteristics of free verse to your own writing? You might want to offer directions as to how the poem should be read.

If you have difficulty writing free verse, try following these pointers:

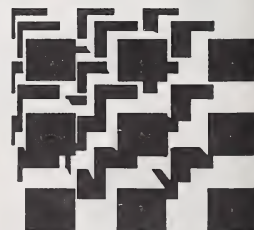
- Choose a colourful or descriptive passage from a story that you think would make a good free-verse poem.
- Set it up on the page so that the main words and phrases become separate lines.
- Leave out unnecessary words.
- Use imaginative language so that a word or phrase will suggest a whole picture.
- Change the verbs from past to present tense to lend the poem immediacy.
- For a final revision you may want to intensify the imagery you've used or to add more. You may also want to repeat certain words to emphasize important ideas.<sup>1</sup>

Good luck!

## New Trends in Poetry

Free verse isn't the only new form of poetry. Some poets have already rejected free verse as old-fashioned. They believe it relies too much on the patterns and meanings of words themselves. Many of these poets are creating **concrete poetry**. In concrete poetry, language is not as important as the overall appearance of the poem.

*Concrete poetry: poetry in which the shape or appearance of the poem contributes to its meaning*



<sup>1</sup> Globe/Modern Curriculum Press for the material from the *Teacher's Guide to Poetry in Focus* by Cameron et al, page 104. Reprinted by permission of Globe/Modern Curriculum Press.



Turn to page 141 in *Poetry in Focus* and look at the two concrete poems “astrological chart (for jan)” by david uu and “like attracts like” by Emmett Williams.

Try reading these poems aloud. Is it possible? Can the meaning of these poems be conveyed orally to an audience? It seems that to obtain the full effect of both poems, they must be taken in visually. In this way they are more like works of art than poems.

JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following ideas.

1. Imagine that the person beside you is blindfolded and it’s your job to explain one of these two poems. What would you say about it?
2. Try writing your own concrete poem using only words, letters, and/or punctuation symbols.





**Shape or picture poetry:**  
poetry made of words or  
letters that create an actual  
picture or form on the page

Another new form of poetry is **shape or picture poetry**. Here, form becomes content. To some degree “astrological chart (for Jan)” is an example of this poetry. Turn to page 142 of *Poetry in Focus* and read the examples of picture poetry.

As you can see, these poems are able to express a range of emotions – from the whimsical to the serious.

### JOURNAL

In your Journal, explain which of these picture poems is your favourite and why. Why don't you try creating your own picture poem?



Turn now to page 146 in *Poetry in Focus* and look at the poem “Daybreak on Lake Opal: High Rockies” by Earle Birney. In a small group or by yourself discuss or think about the following questions.

- Why do you think the poet presents this poem in the shape of a mountain? Describe the effect that the gradual lengthening of the lines has on the mood and pace, or speed, of the poem.

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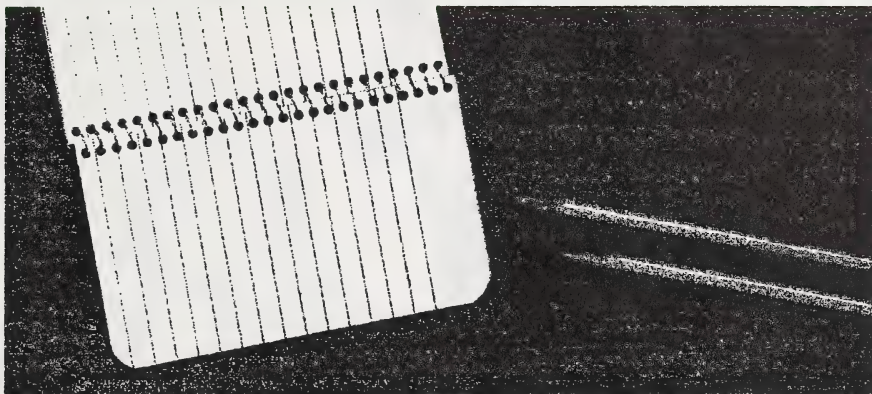
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Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 2: Activity 4.

Who knows how far the limits of poetry will be pushed in the pursuit of new forms? For example, some poets no longer believe that poems should even be on paper. For them, poetry is performance, often an improvised arrangement of sounds and objects in space. Film, slides, music, chant, dance, painting, sculpture, and sound effects are mixed with poetry into a multimedia collage. As a result, no single poem is ever presented the same way twice. Ironically, it sounds a bit like Dadaism, doesn't it? Who knows? Perhaps decades from now the study of poetry in sterile, windowless classrooms will have been replaced by poetic presentations that are all-encompassing – that take place in the middle of an environment that actively appeals to all five senses.



## Activity 5: Writing Your Own Poetry



### Your Poem Collection

At the end of this section you will be asked to hand in a collection of your own poetry. Your poems do not have to be tied to one topic or theme, and you can choose as many different forms as you like. For each poem you will be expected to hand in a statement of purpose for the benefit of the teacher who will be reading them. In this statement you can outline your motivation for writing the poem, point out any of its strengths or weaknesses, or explain any choices you had to make while creating it.

### The Importance of Diction

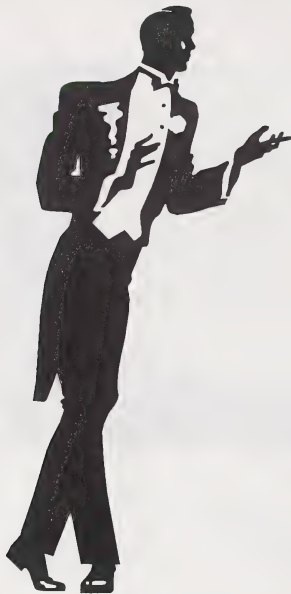
Many students concentrate, and rightly so, on the story or message of their poems. Sometimes, however, not enough attention is paid to the choice of words, or **diction**. Poetry forces the writer to be concise. Every word must contribute to the theme; therefore, a poet should be prepared to point out the way or ways in which each word contributes to the poem. A good example of a poem in which the poet has paid careful attention to diction is the ballad “Richard Cory” by E.A. Robinson.

In the poem, Richard Cory is the richest man around and all the townspeople look up to him because of it. To them, he is more than rich; he is a king, almost a god. The poet contributes to this image through his choice of words.

**Diction:** the choice of words and level of language in writing



Here's the poem. Read it; then answer the question that follows.



### Richard Cory

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,  
We people on the pavement looked at him:  
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,  
Clean favoured, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,  
And he was always human when he talked;  
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,  
“Good-morning,” and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich – yes, richer than a king –  
And admirably schooled in every grace:  
In fine, we thought that he was everything  
To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,  
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;  
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,  
Went home and put a bullet through his head.<sup>1</sup>

Notice the following word choices made by the poet to describe Richard Cory:

- “sole to crown” instead of “head to toe”
- “clean favoured” instead of “well-mannered”
- “imperially slim” instead of “extremely skinny”
- “quietly arrayed” instead of “expensively dressed”

What idea in the poem does E.A. Robinson reinforce by choosing these words?

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Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Activity 5.

<sup>1</sup> “Richard Cory” from *The Children of the Night* by Edwin Arlington Robinson (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1987).

**Denote:** indicate the literal meaning of a thing

**Connote:** indicate the suggested or associated meaning of a thing

Both “imperially slim” and “extremely skinny” mean, or **denote**, the same basic idea – that Richard Cory is a thin man. However, *slim* is a more flattering word for describing thinness than *skinny*. Being slim is equated with being attractive; being skinny, however, suggests, or **connotes**, the proverbial ninety-eight pound weakling.



*Imperially* suggests something royal or kingly; *extremely* suggests that the person may be thin to the point of malnutrition. *Imperially slim* suggests, or **connotes**, that Cory is physically impressive. He is not only rich; he also looks like royalty, and, in fact, he seems to occupy a royal or kingly position in the community. He symbolizes everything the townspeople would like to be. This, of course, would make the news of the last line all the more devastating to them.

JOURNAL

In your Journal explain why you think Cory shot himself. What clues can you find in the poem for your answer?

In your own poetry, be aware of the possible connotations of the words you choose. Try to use words that reinforce the message you’re trying to convey. In the summary of each poem you might point out effective examples of connotative language in your work.

Once you've finished writing a poem, read it aloud. Listen for examples of euphony and cacophony in the language.

**Euphony:** the effect created by pleasant, musical sounds

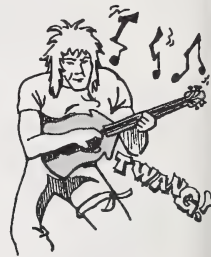


**Euphony** is the effect created by a passage of writing when it sounds pleasant or musical to the ear. A poem that contains many vowels and soft-sounding consonants (l, f, r, m, s, h, n) is said to be *euphonious*: such sounds reflect “the lovely, flowing, restfully musical sounds of harmonious nature.”

A euphonious passage flows smoothly and so can be read quickly. Keep this in mind if you want to depict moments of beauty or tranquility in your poetry.

**Cacophony:** the effect created by harsh, unmusical sounds

**Cacophony**, by contrast, consists of unpleasant, discordant sounds. A poem that contains many harsh-sounding consonants (v, b, d, g, p, k, t) is said to be *cacophonous*. Here's a short example: “The wicked dogs killed the black cat quickly.”



The movement of cacophonous passages is slow and impeded so the lines cannot be read lightly or quickly. Images of conflict, tension, or misery are enhanced by cacophonous writing. You wouldn't want a beautiful, soothing description to be ruined by the accidental use of cacophony.

Moviemakers sometimes use cacophonous speech to manipulate the feelings of their audiences. If you're a fan of the original Star Trek series, listen to Klingon speech the next chance you get. All those harsh, guttural noises are a good illustration of the deliberate use of cacophonous sounds to create an impression of cruelty and viciousness.

## JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following idea.

Write down the most euphonious sentence you can think of. Follow it with the most cacophonous sentence you can think of. Say the sentences out loud, by yourself or in a small group, and see if you appreciate the differences in sound.

## Revising Your Work

In assembling your collection of poems, feel free to use any of the poems you've been working on in your Journal. But don't be content with a first draft; good poetry, like any good writing, is the result of revision. Bad poets are usually too easily satisfied with their work.



If possible, have a friend, or friends, read your poems and offer their comments. Read your poems onto tape; then try listening to the words objectively. Can you find the rhythm in the lines, or do you need to make revisions to make it clearer? Does every word fit the purpose of each poem? Can some words be cut? Are you telling readers what to think or are you allowing them to use their imaginations?

## Follow-up Activities

If you found the activities difficult, you should complete the Extra Help. If you understand the concepts clearly, you should complete the Enrichment.

### Extra Help

Poets make use of a wide variety of techniques to create the effects they want. Rhythm, imagery, figurative language, implication, diction, euphony, cacophony: all these and more are tools of the poet's craft. As you read poetry, and as you write your own poems, you should be aware of – and use – these poetic devices.

Read the following commentary on the poem "High Flight" which you read earlier.



*Sonnet: a rhymed poem of fourteen lines expressing a single idea*

“High Flight” is a **sonnet** about a man flying his own plane. The poet, John Magee, wrote it to convey to people who had never flown before what flying is actually like. In the poem he expresses the utter joy of flying through a world that is so alive, where an “eager plane” chases a “shouting wind.” Here the poet becomes more than a pilot: he is the airplane, turning and leaping like a dancer through the air. You can almost feel the excitement as you follow him through the “burning blue” of the sky and the “wind-swept heights.” In this poem we see that flying is more than just moving through air; it is a divine, mystical experience that shows us the beauty in life. Try to convey this idea as you read the poem aloud. Go slowly and emphasize every other syllable with your voice.

Now answer the following questions about the commentary:

1. Circle the word that refers to the form of the poem.
2. Put quotation marks around an example of personification.
3. Put parentheses around an example of a simile.
4. Put square brackets around an example of metaphor.
5. Write out the line that refers to the purpose of the poem.

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6. Put stars around a line that indicates the rhythm of the poem.
7. Put single quotation marks around an example of touch imagery.
8. Put exclamation marks around the emotion that the poet is trying to convey.
9. Put a rectangular block around the words that express the topic of the poem.
10. Underline the words that express the theme of the poem.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Extra Help.



## Enrichment

**Do one or more of the following questions:**

## 1. Shorter Forms of Poetry

Often the best poems are the shortest ones. A single idea or image conveyed through a series of sensory impressions can affect the reader deeply. Many students, feeling their poems must conform to a rhyme scheme, find themselves padding each line with extra words. In this exercise, you'll have the chance to take your ideas for brief poems and adapt and compress them into other, perhaps more suitable, forms.

Turn to Chapter 14 in *Poetry in Focus* (page 88) and read the paragraphs and poems under the headings “The Haiku,” “The Tanka,” “The Cinquain,” and “The Diamante.”

All of these poetic forms are well suited to the expression of a single idea or image.

Now try writing an example of each one of these poetic forms or just of those you find most appealing.

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Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Enrichment.

## 2. Epigram and Epitaphs

Epigrams and epitaphs are poetic forms that are well suited to poets with a quick wit and an ability to say a lot in few words.



Turn to Chapter 15 in *Poetry in Focus* (page 92) and reread the paragraphs and poems under the headings “The Epigram” and “The Epitaph.”

- a. By yourself or in a small group discuss or think about the meaning of several of these poems. For each example, do you find that it takes twice as many words to explain the poem as it did to write it?

- b. Try writing an example of an epitaph. You can write your own, one for someone who trusts you, or you might want to write one for somebody who is well known.

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Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Enrichment.

3. Poets on Poetry



The best advice about poetry comes from poets themselves. Videotapes such as the *Canadian Literature – Author* series, available from the ACCESS Network, will help you understand both why and how poets write. Here is a list of the videotapes you can choose:

<i>Canadian Literature – Authors</i>	Order Code
<i>George Bowering</i>	VC243802
<i>Earle Birney</i>	VC243805
<i>Patrick Lane</i>	VC243806
<i>Carol Shields</i>	VC243807
<i>Irving Layton</i>	VC243809
<i>bp Nichol</i>	VC243810
<i>Gwendolyn MacEwen</i>	VC243811
<i>Anne Hebert</i>	VC243812
<i>Al Purdy</i>	VC243816
<i>Fred Cogswell</i>	VC243820
<i>Milton Acorn</i>	VC243822
<i>Tom Dawe</i>	VC243823
<i>Robert Kroetsch</i>	VC243825

Earle Birney, Patrick Lane, Irving Layton, and Al Purdy all have poems in *Poetry in Focus*.



If you can get access to these videotapes, select one and watch it. Afterwards in a small group or by yourself discuss or think about the following questions:

- Why does the poet write poetry?
- What is the poet trying to accomplish through poetry that he or she can't accomplish through other genres like the short story for instance.
- How does the poet go about writing a poem? In other words, what is the poet's method?
- What is the most important thing you learned about poetry from this poet?

Write your ideas on these questions in the space provided.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Enrichment.

## Conclusion

In this section you've read a variety of poems and studied some of the concepts that help convey the substance of poetry: imagery, rhythm, diction, inference, figurative language, form, and content. You've looked at several forms of modern poetry and attempted to write your own examples of the "latest trends." You've also had a peek at some ancient poetic forms. In your Journal you've had the opportunity to respond poetically to a number of ideas. Some of these poems may be revised and included in your poetry collection in the Assignment Booklet.

By now, you should have a clear understanding of the language of poetry. You're ready to move on to an examination of style in the work of several poets.

### ASSIGNMENT

In your Assignment Booklet complete the assignment(s) for this section.

# SECTION 3



## POET AND POEM



You've looked at poems in the first two sections without knowing anything about the people who wrote them. To some extent this is a good thing. Each poem is a separate creation and should be judged on its own merits, apart from its connections with other poems or with events in the poet's life.

Yet if poetry is an expression of individual thought and feeling, it's certainly worthwhile knowing more about the people behind the poems. What are their views of the world and its people, and how do these views shape their work?

What connection does one poem have to the rest of a poet's work? What makes one poet's work so different from other poets' work that without even checking we can say, "Oh yes, this poem is definitely by so-and-so."

In this section you'll examine the role of the speaker in poetry and learn about the importance of style in conveying the meaning of a poem. In the last part of this section you'll focus on the work of three different poets. You'll look at each poet's interests, thematic concerns, and stylistic tendencies, and become aware of what makes each poet's work unique.



**Activity 1: Poet and Speaker**

**Tanya:** Y'know, Ms. Grotowski, I still can't figure out why any self-respecting person would want to be a poet.

**Ms. Grotowski:** Why do you say that?

**Tanya:** Well, don't poets find it embarrassing being so personal all the time, putting their lives on paper? I mean, I wouldn't want to tell everyone all the details of my life.

**Ms. Grotowski:** Neither do poets.

**Tanya:** Sure they do. They're always saying "I did this" and "I felt that."

**Ms. Grotowski:** But poets aren't necessarily talking about themselves.

**Tanya:** They use the word "I," don't they?

**Ms. Grotowski:** "I" isn't always the poet. "I" may seem like the poet; "I" may think and feel like the poet, but "I" is often different.

**Tanya:** Well, then, who is she – or he?

**Ms. Grotowski:** Let me explain...

*Persona: the artificial character a person adopts to present to the public*

*Speaker: the character who speaks to the reader in a poem (sometimes the speaker and the author are the same)*



In writing a poem the poet adopts a **persona**, or character. This character is the **speaker** of the poem.

To see how a persona is used by a poet, turn to page 20 in *Poetry in Focus* and look again at the poem “The Sound of Silence.”



Many students assume that the poet is also the speaker of the poem. You may notice in this module that often after reading a poem, questions refer to the feelings of the **poet** rather than the speaker. This is done to avoid confusion. For instance, while poets may be male or female, the speakers of their poems aren’t necessarily of the same gender. The poet does often share the feelings and concerns of the speaker, but generally they are not one and the same. The speaker is the poet’s creation. To keep things simple, however, we will generally assume that the speaker is the same gender as the poet.

For example, in “The Sound of Silence” it isn’t Paul Simon who walks the streets alone, but rather, the speaker. It’s the speaker of the poem who warns people about the “cancer” of silence, and who seems so troubled. Is he or she overly sensitive? mentally ill? or very perceptive? You have to decide for yourself. But make sure you keep the speaker separate in your mind from the poet.

The hazards of confusing speaker and poet become obvious when you’re confronted with a speaker who’s as twisted as the one in “Porphyria’s Lover” – a poem you encountered in Section 4 of Module 1.

## JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following questions.

Do you have any possessions that you keep with you all the time? What purpose do such possessions serve? What would it mean to suddenly have one of these possessions taken away from you?



Turn to page 77 in *Poetry in Focus* and reread the poem “Porphyria’s Lover” by Robert Browning.

Some students might assume that the poet, Robert Browning, is the speaker of the poem. Imagine their confusion and horror when they realize that the speaker has murdered Porphyria and sits up all night with her corpse. Would they think that they’re reading the poet’s confession of murder? They might even miss the fact that a murder has taken place since they wouldn’t be expecting it from the poet. Don’t fall into this trap: separate poet from speaker.



1. a. In “Porphyria’s Lover” what sort of person is the speaker?

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- b. What do you think are his reasons for killing the woman he supposedly loves?

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Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Activity 1.

As shown by “Porphyria’s Lover,” to understand the poem you must first figure out what sort of person the speaker is. But speakers seldom describe themselves. In order to characterize the speaker, you have to look at what he or she says and how.

JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following questions.

We’ve all seen people who have “fallen on hard times” wandering the streets. What’s your usual response when you see someone who fits this description? Have you ever had an encounter with such a person that provoked a response that was out of the ordinary?

Now turn to page 98 in *Poetry in Focus* and read the poem “The Top Hat” by Raymond Souster.





2. Describe the speaker of this poem based on what he says and how he says it. (Take note, the speaker is the one who observes the “old geezer,” not the “old geezer” himself.)

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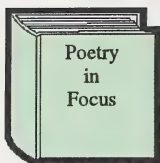
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3. How does the speaker feel about the “old geezer”?

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Now turn to page 78 in *Poetry in Focus* where you'll look at a very different kind of speaker in “The Raven” by Edgar Allan Poe. As you read the poem, think of what kind of person the speaker was before the death of Lenore. Compare this to what he has become since her death.



4. Describe the speaker of “The Raven.”

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Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Activity 1.

JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following ideas.

Imagine that Edgar Allan Poe and Raymond Souster have switched poems. The speaker of “The Top Hat” is now being called on to describe the events of “The Raven.” How do you think he would describe the encounter with the raven? Try writing his description in the speaker’s own voice.

Now imagine that the speaker of “The Raven” is describing “the old geezer” in “The Top Hat.” How would it sound?



As you can see from this comparison, the voice or personality of the speaker has a significant impact on the meaning of the poem. Often the first thing a poet must do is decide which of the characters in the scene should tell the story. For example, think back to the poem “Richard Cory.” The speaker of that poem was one of the townspeople who looked up to Cory. All of the townspeople regarded Cory as “richer than a king,” almost a god-like figure.

5. How might the meaning of the poem have changed if Richard Cory had been the speaker?

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Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 3: Activity 1.



JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following idea.

Look at the poems you've written so far. Consider the speakers of each poem. Are they similar in personality and outlook? Do their voices sound like yours?

Look at your favorite poem and describe its speaker. Now try writing the same poem but through the voice of a different speaker. It could be someone who is already present in the poem, or you can create someone entirely new. This new speaker could be observing the former speaker of the poem and commenting on his or her behaviour.

Afterwards, compare your new poem with the old one. Also compare the tone of voice that each speaker uses. For example, one speaker might have a cheerful tone and the other an angry one; one might be formal and the other casual; or else one might be calm and the other anxious.

Is there any change in the meaning of the poem? Has the change in speaker altered your perception of what you're actually trying to convey?

While you're writing, remember that although neither of the speakers is actually you, they're both part of you. They see through your eyes, and in turn the reader perceives your vision or theme through the eyes of your speaker.





## Activity 2: Style and Substance



*Style: an author's manner of writing*

**Ms. Grotowski:** In discussing the work of any writer, it's important to be able to describe the writer's style.

**Shannon:** What is style, anyway?

**Ms. Grotowski:** Style is the manner of writing peculiar to an author.

**Shannon:** I thought style had to do with clothes.

**Ms. Grotowski:** Style can apply to a lot of things. It can be clothes, cars, poetry.... Style is the way we express ourselves. It's the image we want to convey to the world. Everyone has style.

**Shannon:** What about me? What's my style?

**Ms. Grotowski:** Well, look at what you're wearing? Jeans, a T-shirt, sneakers...

**Shannon:** Yeah, but that's like no style at all.

**Ms. Grotowski:** Okay then, why don't you come to school wearing a dress?

**Shannon:** Not me. I want to be casual.

**Ms. Grotowski:** Exactly. You like to look casual and feel comfortable. You want to behave in an easy-going way. Therefore, I could say you have a casual, relaxed style.

**Shannon:** I can handle that.

# STYLE

## JOURNAL

In your Journal describe your own style by considering the following ideas and questions about style.

What sort of image do you want to convey to the world?

Most people agree that the best style is not to consciously create a style but simply to be yourself. In other words, style should be natural.

Think of a famous person who for you has a positive image. Describe what this person's style is like. Why is it admirable?

Can you think of a famous person who has a negative image in the media? How would you describe this person's style? What is it about his or her style that makes the media react negatively?



In literature a writer's personality, or voice, is expressed through his or her style. The more exceptional the personality, the more interesting the style will be. But what does it mean to describe a writer's style? With style, you have to look at the writer's conscious tendencies or habits. As you read a passage of prose or poetry, you might use this checklist to ask yourself the following questions:

### A Style Checklist

- Does the writer prefer simple or difficult words?
- Is the writing descriptive with lots of adjectives, adverbs, and figures of speech?
- In general are the sentences long or short; simple or complex? Does the rhythm of a typical sentence flow euphoniously, or is it broken up into many segments, creating cacophony?
- Does the writer often use the same words or phrases, and if so, what is the purpose of this repetition?
- Does the writer use language that you would hear in ordinary conversation, or does it sound formal?
- How would you describe the **tone** of the writing: Is it casual? formal? matter-of-fact? overexcited? understated? humorous?
- What about the subjects and themes? Do the stories or poems of this writer tend to explore similar subjects or themes?

***Tone:** in literature, the attitude of a writer to subject matter and audience – for example, serious, playful, formal*

Run through this checklist in your mind as you reread two poems from Activity 1.

Turn to page 78 in *Poetry in Focus* and reread "The Raven." Then turn to page 98 and reread "The Top Hat."

1. Complete the following chart of the differences between these two poems. First of all, describe the personality of each speaker. Then describe the language of each poem and the ways in which each poet uses it. After that take a stanza from each poem and examine its rhythm. Write down your findings in point form.



	"The Raven"	"The Top Hat"
Speaker		
Language		
Rhythm		

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Activity 2.



Writers' styles should always suit their subject matter.

Edgar Allan Poe's style is very formal yet emotionally charged. It is well suited to the tense moments he writes about where life and death seem to hang in the balance.

## JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following ideas.

Choose a trivial topic and attempt to write about it in the style of Edgar Allan Poe. Can you make it as tense, exciting, and full of foreboding as he does in "The Raven"? How ridiculous does it sound to you – using a style like his to write about a mundane subject like changing a light bulb, or getting a movie out at your local video store?



Quoth the salesman,  
"Nevermore."

On the other hand Raymond Souster is a much more down-to-earth writer. He writes about small moments in a simple way. Imagine how out of place his casual, conversational style would be in "The Raven." Prove the point now by choosing a life-and-death subject, such as a climber hanging from a rock over a gorge, or a scene on a battlefield, and then writing about it in an imitation of Raymond Souster's style.

## Analysing Style



Some poets are noted for particular aspects of their styles. Dylan Thomas, for example, is highly regarded for the energetic language of his poems. His words almost force you to read them aloud.

### JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following questions.

Have you ever had to “play cheerleader” with someone who was perhaps too exhausted or depressed to keep striving for a particular goal? What did you say to keep this person going?



Turn to page 110 in *Poetry in Focus* and read the poem, “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night” by Dylan Thomas. Read the poem aloud.

In this poem, the speaker urges his dying father not to give up but to fight death to the very end. He paints life as a heroic struggle and points to different people who have “raged” against death.

2. Describe what you consider to be the most interesting characteristics of Dylan Thomas's style.

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Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 3: Activity 2.

Remember that style should always be appropriate and reinforce the theme of the poem, even in a crazy, funny-sad story like Uncle Sol's in e.e. cummings' "nobody loses all the time" — the poem you'll be reading next.

**JOURNAL**

In your Journal respond to the following questions.

Have you ever known people who you thought fit the mold of the “born failure”? Why did you perceive them that way? Was the problem with their actions or their perceptions of themselves? Did any of them ever break out of the mold? Describe your feelings about these people.



Turn to page 95 in *Poetry in Focus* and read the poem “nobody loses all the time” by e.e. cummings.

In the poem Uncle Sol’s life is a string of failures, each one more humorous and bizarre than the last. For him the situation is not so funny, and in the end he kills himself. The ending leaves the reader uncertain; do you laugh at the humour or are you appalled by the tragedy of Uncle Sol’s “success”?





3. Describe the speaker of the poem.

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4. Why is the style suitable for the poem?

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Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Activity 2.

### JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following ideas.

1. The subject of “nobody loses all the time” is serious, yet the poet’s treatment of it is so light-hearted that the seriousness is undermined. Think of a similarly serious topic, perhaps an incident you read about in the newspaper. Put the incident into poetic form, undermining the seriousness of the topic by imitating the speaker and the style of cummings’ poem.
2. Now that you’ve examined the characteristics of other poets’ styles, take a look at your own style. Read through the poems you’ve written in this module. Imagine that you’re somebody else looking over your poems. In your Journal write what you think a reader might say about the style of your poems.

### Activity 3: Three Poets and Their Works



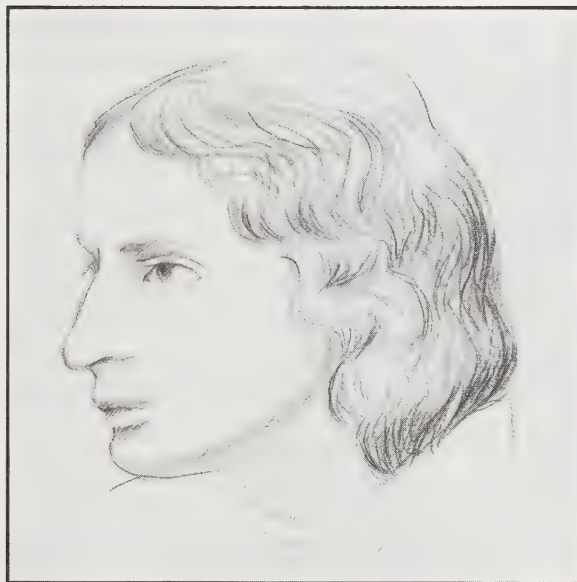
#### JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following questions.

Do you have a favourite writer? What, in particular, do you like about this author's work? Is it the plots? the characters? How would you describe the writer's style?

In this activity you'll look at three poets: John Keats, Margaret Atwood, and Robert Frost. You'll look at their lives, outlooks, and poems.

#### John Keats (1795-1821)



The life of John Keats is a tragic story. He died of tuberculosis in 1821 when he was only twenty-five years old, but in his brief life he managed to write enough superb poetry to establish himself as one of the greatest poets to write in English. "Ode to a Nightingale" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn" are just two of Keats' masterpieces.



For more on the life of John Keats turn to page 121 in *Poetry in Focus* and read the biographical notes presented there.

1. List three details that you find most striking about Keats' life.

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### JOURNAL

In your Journal write about any chance you've ever had to meet and talk with a famous person. What was it like? How did you feel afterward?



2. In the poem, "Junkets," on page 121 of *Poetry in Focus*, one of Canada's best-known poets, Alden Nowlan, imagines what it would be like to meet John Keats. Read "Junkets."

- a. What does Alden Nowlan want such an encounter to be like?

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- b. What does he think would really happen instead?

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Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Activity 3.

Throughout his life Keats’ imagination was fired by images of nature.

JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following ideas.

What ideas and images come to your mind when you think of autumn? What sights and sounds do you identify with it? Are the images mostly positive or negative? Compared to the other seasons, where would you rank autumn in terms of enjoyment? Why?



Turn to page 122 in *Poetry in Focus* and read Keats’ “Ode to Autumn.” An ode is a lyric poem written in praise or memory of someone or something. Here, Keats remembers a walk taken on a rich and beautiful autumn day.

3. a. How does Keats describe autumn in the first stanza?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b. Which of the images described here is your favourite?

\_\_\_\_\_

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4. In Stanza 2 there are many examples of personification.

a. In what human forms does autumn appear?

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b. How are these forms appropriate to autumn?

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5. Stanza 3 shows the winding down of an autumn day.

a. To which senses does the third stanza particularly appeal?

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b. In this stanza Keats heaps image upon image. What effect does this create?<sup>1</sup>

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Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Activity 3.

<sup>1</sup> Globe/Modern Curriculum Press for the adaptations of Questions 3, 4, and 5 from *Teacher's Guide to Poetry in Focus* by Cameron et al, page 65. Reprinted by permission of Globe/Modern Curriculum Press.



### JOURNAL

In your Journal explain whether you think “Ode to Autumn” is a sad poem and why or why not.

During his long illness John Keats fell in love with a woman named Fanny Brawne. Because of his sickness they were unable to marry, but thoughts of Fanny and the love they might have shared haunted Keats during the last two years of his life.

Turn to page 122 in *Poetry in Focus* and read the poem “This Living Hand” by John Keats.



### JOURNAL

In your Journal use the following questions to write a response to the poem.

What is the poem saying to you? How would you feel if you received such a poem from someone close to you? Would your response to it be positive, negative, or mixed? Why?

Even though Keats died believing his poetry was a failure, he never lost faith in the power of poetry to echo the beauty and possibilities of life. He expressed it in this way:

A thing of beauty is a joy forever:  
Its loveliness increases; it will never  
Pass into nothingness;

### Margaret Atwood (1939 - )



Margaret Atwood is one of Canada's best-known and widely read writers. As a poet and novelist, she has earned both national and international critical acclaim. One of her novels, *The Handmaid's Tale*, has been turned into a major motion picture.

Turn to page 82 in *Poetry in Focus* and read the biographical notes on Margaret Atwood.

6. What in Atwood's early life influenced her later fascination with pioneering and the power of nature over human beings?

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Now turn to page 83 in *Poetry in Focus* and read Atwood's poem "The Planters." Then answer the following questions:

7. Sum up the main idea, or theme, of "The Planters."

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8. List a few words from the poem that help convey the sense of hopelessness that the poet creates.

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9. In "The Planters" find an example of each of the following figures of speech:

a. simile: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. metaphor: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





Turn again to page 83 in *Poetry in Focus* and read “Disembarking at Quebec,” which deals with the feelings of a nineteenth-century immigrant upon arriving in Canada.

## JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following ideas.

The overwhelming feeling of “Disembarking at Quebec” is one of being out of place – a “stranger in a strange land.” Have you ever had an experience of this sort – an experience of being alone and out of place? If so, describe it, along with your feelings at the time. Did you ever get over it? If you did, what made you get over it?

10. How does the description of the newly arrived immigrant in the first stanza of “Disembarking at Quebec” contrast with the description of her new land? Point out a few concrete details to support your answer.

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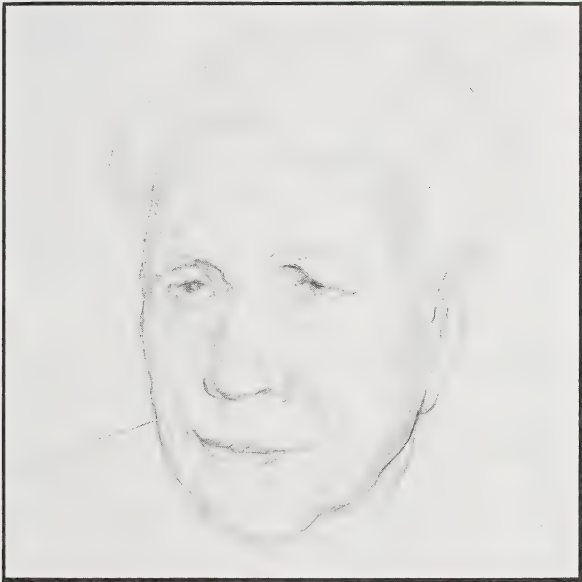
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Robert Frost (1874-1963)



In his poetry the American writer Robert Frost looks beneath the surface into the interior of human life. Like Keats, he was a lover of nature; his most profound conclusions are built on his detailed observations of the natural world.



Turn to page 24 in *Poetry in Focus* and read the biographical notes on Robert Frost. Then answer the following questions:

11. Robert Frost lived in New England. How did this have a direct impact on his poetry?

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Although Frost’s poems may appear to be straightforward, they are not necessarily easy to understand. They often mix feelings of happiness and misery, hope and despair, so the reader is seldom left with a single, dominant feeling about a poem. For example, turn to page 24 in *Poetry in Focus* and read “Dust of Snow.”

12. Why can this poem be described as both happy and sad?

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In his attitude to life, Frost could be called a realistic optimist. He believed that life is basically positive, yet he recognized the evil of which humankind is capable. To him desire and hate are humanity's chief agents of destruction; either one can easily destroy all that has been created.

Turn to page 25 in *Poetry in Focus* and read Frost's poem "Fire and Ice."



### JOURNAL

In your Journal respond to the following ideas.

1. Do you agree with Frost that desire and hate are the chief enemies of humankind? Which one do you think has the greatest destructive power? Can you think of any other "enemies"? Can you support your arguments with examples from life?
2. How do you escape the stresses of everyday life? Could any of your "escapes" be described as "childish"? What does "going back to nature" mean to you? The next poem you'll read presents Frost's views on matters like these.

Turn again to page 25 in *Poetry in Focus* and read the poem "Birches."





The narrator speaks of a boy swinging happily on a birch tree. The boy is a friend to the tree; his swinging bends the tree just enough to ease its stiffness. By contrast, ice storms are the enemy of birch trees, bending them so much that they are damaged permanently.

13. According to the speaker, swinging on the birch branch teaches the boy important lessons about life. What are they?

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14. In what ways does the speaker feel like the boy swinging on the birch branch?

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Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Activity 3.

Frost claims that a poem should begin in delight and end in wisdom. This poem begins with the delight of a boy swinging from a tree and ends with the understated realization that “One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.” In fact, you would think that to get in touch with the beauty of nature and the joy of living, being a “swinger of birches” would be the ideal occupation. Frost remains firm in the belief that a close relationship with nature can do nothing but benefit humanity.





WESTFILE INC.

In your study of these three poets, you've looked at the connections between each writer's life, ideas, and poems. You'll be expected to look for the same connections in your assignment at the end of this section. It would probably be helpful to try the first Enrichment question before doing the assignment for this section.

## Follow-up Activities

If you found the activities difficult, you should complete the Extra Help. If you understand the concepts clearly, you should complete the Enrichment.

### Extra Help

Every poem, like every work of art, is a creation unto itself and separate from the artist who created it. Yet as expressions of ideas and emotions, poems can often be best understood when something is known about the poet who wrote them and the context in which they were written. This creates a dilemma for any serious reader of poetry: Where does the study of literature end and the study of the psychology of writers begin?

Nevertheless, for students just getting into poetry, knowing something of the poets whose work is being read will increase the understanding of the poetry itself.

In this section you looked at these three poets:

- John Keats
- Margaret Atwood
- Robert Frost

Now do the following questions:

1. Here are four passages from four different pieces of literature. Read them and then when you've finished look at the descriptions that follow of four different speakers. Match each speaker with the appropriate passage.

**Passage A:**

In the fields the stubble from last autumn's harvest stood dry and bleached in the January sun, and the land was bare of snow and was parched and cracked. When the soldiers came we could see their dust, a dirty patch on the horizon, a day before they reached us, but they kept marching by, tired and lifeless, eyes glazed and fixed straight ahead, and then they were gone. Slowly the dust settled and soon there was nothing to show for their passing but parched fields, and the bodies of those who had collapsed and their comrades were too tired to pick up.



WESTFILE INC.





WESTFILE INC.

**Passage B:**

I'd give anything to be walking in the forests again looking at the tall trees with the moss clinging and sometimes it falls off in great patches and then there's the light filtering through the topmost branches and you can really see the shafts outlined against those massive trunks just like in a stained-glass window from a medieval cathedral which by the way is what woods of this sort remind me of quiet, dusted cathedrals with only a few insects humming their chants in praise of the creator.



WESTFILE INC.

**Passage C:**

I know she's different now. I can't put my finger on it, but she's changed. I saw it first in her eyes; they refused to meet mine, and when they did, they glittered. Next it was her voice. There was something that I'd never heard before. An edge, perhaps, or a new pitch. At first I told myself it was my imagination, but now I know it's real, and it's not going to go away. It's getting worse.

**Passage D:**

Seven p.m. The Crazy Hour. Summer in the City. Nothing moved. Nothing stirred. An old man, drunk on solvent, staggered, three-directionally, out of the battered rooming house. He clung to a railing, sniffed the air, felt the sun, retreated.



WESTFILE INC.

- a. **Speaker 1:** This person observes the world dispassionately and, in fact, seems somewhat detached from it. He or she records observations like facts, without being affected by them.

This describes the speaker of Passage \_\_\_\_\_.

- b. **Speaker 2:** This person feels life intensely like a wave crashing over him or her. The speaker is given to emotional flights and has a great enthusiasm for life.

This describes the speaker of Passage \_\_\_\_\_.



- c. **Speaker 3:** This person is also a watcher and does not join in. Somewhat unemotionally, the speaker watches the world passing by much like the seasons. The speaker has a sense of a world where everything seems to be moving except him- or herself.

This describes the speaker of Passage \_\_\_\_\_.

- d. **Speaker 4:** This speaker feels a rising sense of panic and tries to keep emotions under control, fearing, however, that it may be impossible.

This describes the speaker of Passage \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Now while referring to the four passages in Question 1, read the following four descriptions of style. Match each description with the passage that you feel is appropriate.

a. **Style 1:**

The style here suggests the casualness of thought rather than of speech. Thoughts are expressed directly without regard for “rules.” Ideas and emotions flow freely from one association to the next.

This describes the style of Passage \_\_\_\_\_.

b. **Style 2:**

The writing is abrupt and jerky. The passage employs phrases rather than complete sentences. Its tone is matter-of-fact; the writer doesn’t embellish the facts but leaves them bare.

This describes the style of Passage \_\_\_\_\_.

c. **Style 3:**

The style in this passage is purposefully vague; much is hinted at but little is said. The statements and phrases used are short.

This describes the style of Passage \_\_\_\_\_.

d. **Style 4:**

In this passage, long sentences suggest the unbrokenness of time. Everything continues at the same measured pace. The connectedness of things is suggested by the repetition of words. The author enhances the flow of the sentences by placing adjectives after the nouns.

This describes the style of Passage \_\_\_\_\_.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Extra Help.

**Enrichment**

Do one or both of the following questions:

1. Imagine that you're a renowned poet – and that you've been asked to produce some autobiographical material. Research your life for clues to your own development as a poet. Ask yourself questions like these:
  - Who in your family most influenced your development as a great poet?
  - When did you first realize that you wanted to devote yourself to writing poetry?
  - What important ideas are you trying to convey in your work?
  - Does your work have any recurring subjects or themes?
  - What aspects of your style make you unique as a poet?

Then choose a poem you've written that you feel is representative of your greatness as a poet and explain why. Remember, this is no time for modesty.

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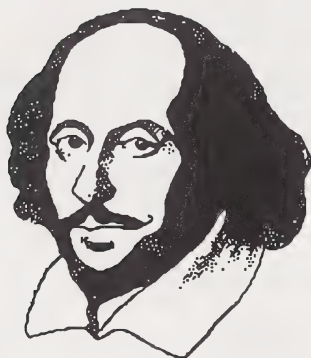
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This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



2. A sonnet is a poem of fourteen lines expressing a single, powerful idea. Typically, each line is ten syllables long, and every other syllable is emphasized as you read it. However, they have been written to follow many different rhyme schemes so there is actually no “correct” rhyme scheme for a sonnet.



Sonnets used to be a very popular form of poetry. Shakespeare wrote over a hundred sonnets, and many of them are fresh and insightful even today. Poets seldom write sonnets today, partly because free verse has made almost any rhyming poem seem stilted and old-fashioned, but also because sonnets are difficult to write. A pattern of fourteen ten-syllable lines is restrictive; it forces the writer to be concise. Still, writing a sonnet is a good challenge. Even free-verse poets attempt sonnets just to prove they can do it.



There are a number of sonnets in *Poetry in Focus*. Here are some of them:

- “Love Is Not All” by Edna St. Vincent Millay (page 104)
- “Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer’s Day?” by William Shakespeare (page 104)
- “Solitude” by Archibald Lampman (page 113)
- “A November Landscape” by E.J. Pratt (page 114)

Reading these poems may give you some ideas for your own sonnet. For example, you could adapt a first line or an idea from one of them. Here are some other suggestions:

- Give thought to something that is important to you. It may be an object, a person, an idea, a problem, or emotional experience.
- As you write, try to maintain the appropriate rhythm, or metre, of accenting every other syllable. Concentrate on the rhyme scheme as well. You can choose whatever rhyme scheme you want. Keep in mind that a poet does not always end a thought at the end of each line but may have it extend into the next line. This gives you more flexibility and sophistication and also keeps your sonnet from sounding like a nursery rhyme.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Globe/Modern Curriculum Press for the adaptations of material from *Teacher’s Guide to Poetry in Focus* by Cameron et al, page 123. Reprinted by permission of Globe/Modern Curriculum Press.



- If you’re stuck for an idea, find a story about a character or an emotion and recreate its content in sonnet form. Or take a look at the sonnet, “A November Landscape” on page 114 in *Poetry in Focus*. The opening four lines, also called a quatrain, contain a vivid example of personification, pairing November with the verb *seized*. Choose another month, or season, and write an opening quatrain in which you personify that month and develop an action that suits its temperament. Can you develop other aspects of the month in the last ten lines?

Go ahead now and see if you can write your own sonnet. If you need to use rough paper, go ahead. Connect yourself with one of the long-standing traditions of English literature.

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Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Enrichment.

## Conclusion

In this section you've focused on the important role that speaker and style play in conveying the meaning of a poem. You now know how to identify the characteristics of a writer's style and have demonstrated this understanding by writing stylistic imitations of different writers.

As well, by focusing on three individual writers, you were able to look at the thematic connections between different poems by the same author and see how a writer's life experience and outlook can influence the poetry that he or she writes.

### ASSIGNMENT

In your Assignment Booklet complete the assignment(s) for this section.

## MODULE SUMMARY




This module was designed to make the study of poetry enjoyable. Partly this was done by encouraging you to make connections between the poems you read and the feelings and experiences of your own life. Poetry is above all the language of feelings; to truly appreciate a poem, you must be able to relate to it on an emotional level.

You were also introduced to, or reacquainted with, many of the terms that make up the language of poetry. You should now be capable of making inferences from the poems you read.

Finally, you examined the work of several different poets in order to see the connections that exist between a poet's life, ideas, and poems.

Now that you've finished your module on poetry, don't lock away what you've learned in the back of your brain until your Grade 11 teacher demands that you dust it off and bring it out again. No matter what, poetry will play an important part in your life. It's a dynamic form of expression not meant to be restricted to the classroom. As long as you have the enthusiasm to say, "I wonder....," it will be out there somewhere, waiting for you.

# Appendix

	<b>Glossary</b>
	<b>Activities</b>
	<b>Extra Help</b>
	<b>Enrichment</b>





## Glossary

### Anthology

- a collection of literary selections

### Cacophony

- the effect created by harsh, unmusical sounds

### Compression

- in writing, the reduction of words, usually resulting in an intensification of meaning

### Concrete poetry

- poetry in which the shape or appearance of the poem contributes to its meaning

### Connote

- indicate the suggested or associated meaning of a thing

### Denote

- indicate the literal meaning of a thing

### Diction

- the choice of words and level of language in writing

### Epithet

- a descriptive expression that points out a characteristic of a person or thing

### Euphony

- the effect created by pleasant, musical sounds

### Figurative meaning

- the suggested or associated meaning of a word

### Figure of speech

- an expression that makes use of figurative language – for example, simile, metaphor, and personification

### Free verse

- poetry in which a poem generates its own rules of form

### Hyperbole

- the use of exaggeration for emphasis to create a serious or humorous effect

### Imply

- suggest a meaning indirectly

### Infer

- draw a conclusion based on evidence

### Inference

- a conclusion based on evidence

### Literal meaning

- the actual meaning of a word

### Ode

- a lyric poem written in praise of someone or something

**Persona**

- the artificial character a person adopts to present to the public

**Personification**

- the giving of human qualities to animals, ideas, or inanimate objects

**Rhythm**

- in language, the sound pattern created by the speed and flow of stressed and unstressed syllables

**Shape or  
picture poetry**

- poetry made of words or letters that create an actual picture or form on the page

**Sonnet**

- a rhymed poem of fourteen lines expressing a single idea

**Speaker**

- the character who speaks to the reader in a poem (sometimes the speaker and the author are the same)

**Style**

- an author's manner of writing

**Tone**

- in literature, the attitude of a writer to subject matter and audience – for example, serious, playful, formal

**Understatement**

- the representation of something as less than it is, often for humorous effect

## Suggested Answers

### Section 1: Activity 1

1. It is an understatement to say that answers may vary here. You may have had some problems with the poetry you've read in the past. Don't worry; even people who like poetry don't like everything about poetry. However, most criticisms or reasons for disliking poetry fall under one main statement: "I don't understand it." Many people think poetry is a mysterious code that can be broken only by university professors. It needn't be this way. Poetry is above all a personal expression. After all, if you can't relate to a poem on a personal level, it's unlikely you'll appreciate it on an intellectual level.
2. a. There are no right or wrong answers, only good reasons. It's a poem if you think it is and can offer reasons to support your belief.

Some people might say this isn't actually a poem – that it's really two ordinary prose sentences arranged to look like poetry. They might criticize it for not being "poetic" enough. Where, for example, are the interesting descriptions, the adjectives and adverbs, the figures of speech that make up a typical poem?

Others would say it's definitely a poem. The pauses fall naturally at the end of each line. The poem captures a moment in time. Leonard Cohen describes what he sees and wonders about and leaves the reader with the same uncertainty.

- b. Is the poet suggesting that the world is full of people like him – poets? Or perhaps he's saying that the world is full of observers, sitting in their windows, waiting (for their whole lives?) for something to happen. As in most poems, he doesn't tell readers what to think. They're left to draw their own conclusions.

### Section 1: Activity 2

1. Answers will, of course, vary. Examples have already been provided for a, b, c, and d. Here are a few ideas for the remaining subjects.
  - e. **summer:** light-headed summer
  - f. **rock and roll:** ear-hardened rock and roll
  - g. **sleep:** Nature's medicine, sleep
  - h. **shopping mall:** money-magnet shopping mall
  - i. **mountain:** sky-slicing mountain
  - j. **hamburger:** diet-enemy hamburger



2. Think back to the inverted-pyramid style of news reporting that you studied in Module 4 or watch a television newscast to see how a fatality is reported. Here's an example:

Police are still investigating the death of an Aspen Valley farm worker who apparently succumbed to exposure during the recent cold spell. The man apparently went out to check a pasture fence during a blizzard and got lost due to the near-zero visibility conditions. Tragically, police found the man's body and that of his dog less than a hundred metres from the farmhouse. So far, police have ruled out foul play...

3. The matter-of-fact language gives readers the sense of how "routine" death can be. People die every day often under senseless circumstances, and Suknaski emphasizes this by using everyday language. Despite the fact that death is something that has to be dealt with in our daily lives, it still leaves people shocked and numb. For that reason, Suknaski uses words sparingly. Instead of trying to look for an explanation, he simply describes what happened. This makes readers realize how easily death can claim a life.

### Section 1: Activity 3

A strong emotion in the poem is the feeling of loneliness and isolation. The speaker walks alone down dark streets surrounded by the "sound of silence." There is even loneliness amid crowds of people since no one seems to know how to communicate with each other. Did you think of any other emotions? Did you include details to defend your ideas?

### Section 1: Activity 4

1. a. It seems that Miriam Waddington wants to show that the world of her rural childhood, full of "empty spaces" and "snowblurred geography," is more precious to her than the time she spent later on in places that are thought of as more exciting like Paris and London.  
b. A variety of emotions are conveyed in this poem – the joy of childhood, the longing for the past, the determination to find "miracles" and contentment in life. Can you think of any others?
2. Over the years owls have been laden with a variety of symbolic associations. Because they hunt at night, they are sometimes associated with witchcraft, evil, and also with death. Because of the calm, intelligent look of their eyes, they have come to symbolize wisdom as in "the wise old owl." When perched on a branch, they seem to observe and reflect the world around them. Their "hoo" sound strikes a plaintive, solemn note with listeners. It's as if they're commenting on the often painful state of the world. Can you think of any other associations?
3. Because the owl is a powerful bird that hunts at night, it represents perfectly the death and danger that the narrator has escaped. He seeks shelter at the inn as though he were an animal escaping an owl. Its cry, "sad" and "unable to rejoice," reminds him of those who are still out there. The duck, on the other hand, is not threatening at all. Its quacking and waddling make it a source of laughter rather than a source of fear. Its quack isn't solemn enough to adequately sum up all the suffering of humanity. For these reasons it seems more appropriate for a cartoon than for a dark, dangerous forest. What do you think?

## Section 1: Activity 5

1. “Cats in the Cradle” is about a father who is too busy to spend much time with his son though the boy keeps wanting to do things together. As the father gets older, he finally does have time to spend with his child, but the son is already an adult and no longer has time to spend with his father. At the end of the poem the father realizes that his son has grown up to be exactly like him – in a negative sense.
2. One possible answer is that the poem suggests that families must change their priorities. All along the father says he has no time to spend with his son and so shows that he places little importance on his relationship with his child. Then, because the father has little attachment to the son, the son grows up with little attachment to the father. The poet seems to say that love must not be taken for granted, or that communication is a precious thing that must be nurtured.
3. Answers will vary, but the poem suggests that the people – adults in particular – have destroyed everything magnificent about the lion. They’ve robbed him of his dignity; they would gladly paint his mane to match their shirts, or use his toenails for tie clips. Ironically, they are upset that the lion is no longer magnificent. They’ve made him like themselves – dull – and they don’t even realize it.
4. She realizes that the world becomes a threatening place when she is away from her love.
5. There are many words that suggest that for her the world is threatening. The stars “jut” against her, the wind has “ridges,” streets “wedge” her away, street lamps “prick” her eyes, and the night “wounds” her with its “sharp edges.”
6.
  - a. Now that the poet is an adult, he realizes that for his father, being a parent wasn’t much fun sometimes. There were chores to do that only he could do, and suffering that he went through with patience and acceptance.
  - b. As a child, the poet, like most children, was probably too absorbed in his own world to understand the concerns of others.
7. There are many phrases that the poet uses to illustrate that the world of his home on a winter morning was hostile. Here are some of them: the cold is “blueblack” (which, if you think about it, is the colour of a bruise); the father’s hands were “cracked”; the cold was “splintering”; the house itself was full of “chronic angers.”
8. The poet seems to find life boring and predictable. She yearns for adventure.
9. The poet says she didn’t realize she was at the crest of the hill because the brambles kept catching her skirt. She was so busy stooping to pick them off that she hardly noticed the view. Also, she says, the air was dull and she wouldn’t have been able to see much anyway.

10. You could say both of these poems are about journeys on the road of life. In “Travel,” the poet feels she is stuck beside the road, or train track, of life; she wants to get back on and start moving again. In “The Long Hill” the poet is surprised to find that she is on the downhill slope of life. She wasn’t aware of having already reached the crest, or turning point, of her life. She shows how easy it is not to notice the major moments in the journey.
11. There are a number of possibilities. What follows is one of them. Have you thought of any others?

In “Travel,” there is the feeling that one has to stay on the track of life in order to keep growing or learning. As soon as you get off the train, you are in danger of stagnating. “The Long Hill” seems to suggest that people are so busy that they never take the time to stop, evaluate their lives, and see where they are. The poet didn’t realize she was at the mid-point of her life, or “the crest,” because she was so busy with the details, or “the brambles,” of life. Only now that she is on the downhill road toward death can she look back and assess her journey through life.

## Section 1: Follow-up Activities

### Extra Help

1. a. and b. After you’ve written your poems, review each line, deleting words that you feel don’t contribute to the overall meaning of the poems. Rearrange words or add some if necessary. Add another line to each as a conclusion if you wish. Write a title for each poem. Don’t stop here; now try writing a poem without any guidance.
2. Compiling this checklist should help you decide which poems work well together under your topic. It may also give you some inspiration for writing a poem that you can include in your anthology.

### Enrichment

1. Chances are your cut-out poem will be a garbled mess, but can you arrange the lines in a way that makes sense or at least sounds good? Failing that, can you explain your creation in a way that would convince your listeners that you may actually be on to something new and exciting?
2. This assignment requires you to make use of **juxtaposition** – putting unlike objects together in order to make a statement. Avoid a collage where all the pictures are blandly similar. Combine or juxtapose startlingly different pictures in order to make your thematic statement.



## Section 2: Activity 1

1. Here are some possible answers:

- Poetry uses fewer words to express an idea.
- A poem has a break, or space, at the end of a line.
- A poem is often divided into segments called **stanzas**.
- A poem can arrange itself any way it likes on the page.

Did you think of any others?

2. These poems all have a break at the end of each line; as you can see, each line begins with a capital letter. They are all written in a single stanza and have a rhyme scheme (aabba). They also have the same rhythmic pattern: three stressed, or emphasized, syllables in each of lines 1, 2, and 5; and two stressed syllables in each of lines 3 and 4.
3. a. Think back to when you read “The Highwayman” aloud with a partner in Module 2. The poet creates a sense of suspense and urgency. The lines are long and flowing; they’re meant to be read quickly and almost breathlessly, perhaps in imitation of a galloping horse. The use of repetition like “The highwayman came riding – /Riding – riding – ” creates a lulling, rhythmic pattern that draws the reader into the story.
- b. “Mountain Lion” begins with long, flowing lines of description. The reader can read quickly, almost musically, without pausing. The poet then changes the rhythm suddenly as the danger appears. The lines are short, abrupt, and jerky. There are almost no adjectives or adverbs to make the lines flow. By using only nouns and verbs the poet gives the reader just the bare, jolting action.
4. The poem appeals to your sense of touch. Sid Marty wants you to feel the difficulties of climbing a mountain. Some examples are the “pain” in his ankles and his “stiffkneed” evenings leading to “arthritic old age.” The wind is “tearing.” The poet speaks of “balance” and “finger ends”; as he climbs, he feels as if he’s carrying Christ’s cross uphill.
5. The poem appeals to your sense of hearing. In his solitude, the poet can hear the silence around him. Silence, or the absence of sound, is still a hearing sensation. “The air/Hangs quiet”; the woods are “still.” What sounds there are become magnified: “a hawk screams”; “a woodpecker/Startles”; “The creamy white-throat pipes five pure notes.” The silence is “pierced” by the sun.

## Section 2: Activity 2

Following are just some of the possible examples:

1. **simile:**

“Invictus”: “Out of the night that covers me/Black as the Pit from pole to pole,”

“The Long Voyage”: Now the dark waters at the bow/fold back, like earth against the plow;”



2. **metaphor:**

“Invictus”: “I am the captain of my soul.”

“Toronto Crossing”: “a furred fruit on wool”

3. **personification:**

“The Sound of Silence”: “Hello darkness my old friend”; “a vision softly creeping”

Did you find any other examples? There are many examples of simile and personification.

## Section 2: Activity 3

1. Answers may vary widely here. Some may find the mood positive and welcoming based on the interesting architecture of the doorway, and if you enjoy architectural design, you may feel curious about what the inside of the building looks like. However, some may find the mood of this picture gloomy and forbidding. The door is open, but who opened it? The entrance is dark; what lurks within? There are stairs leading upwards just inside the door which may make it seem even more threatening to the wary visitor.
2. Again there are many possibilities here. The hand appears to be coming out of darkness, reaching for the light. Is it trying to escape from something? Or is the hand trying to grab something to drag back into the darkness? Perhaps it's attached to a falling body and is desperately trying to hold onto the light so as not to be dragged into the darkness itself. What inferences about the picture did you make? What details led you to make these inferences?
3. In his lecture the astronomer reduced the heavens to mathematics – a series of “figures,” mathematical “proofs,” and “charts and diagrams.” It was no longer mysterious and beautiful but rather boring and factual.
4. The poet finds he understands and appreciates the stars much better by just going outside at night and looking at them. Scientific examination destroys the natural wonder and awe with which we usually look at the stars.
5. The swans are wild; they fly in the air and go where they please. The poet finds there is nothing in her life “to match the flight of wild birds flying.” She lives in an airless house with locks and she is ruled by emotions which plunge her back and forth between happiness and misery. The swans don't seem to be ruled by anything; the poet wishes they would come back and fly over again. It is as if she wants to be like them.

## Section 2: Activity 4

1. The poem consists of two lines:

A cursed fiend wrought death disease and pain.  
A blessed friend brought breath and ease again.

2. There are many possible answers to this question. Here are three:

- Free-verse poetry often ignores rules of punctuation and capitalization.
- If you read it aloud, some free-verse poetry sounds exactly like prose.
- Free verse generally avoids elaborate description and figures of speech. In this way it's more accessible to the average reader – like a short story.

3. There may be several possible answers for this question. Here is one:

As the lines lengthen, the pace of the poem becomes faster. The effect is that of a snowball gathering speed down a mountainside. In this case the sunlight is the snowball. As the sun rises above the nearby mountains, the light first touches the peak of the mountain and then moves down the face more and more quickly as the mountain broadens into the lake at its foot and then to the world beyond. At the beginning of the poem the mood is solemn, as if the world is dead or frozen. As the sun rises higher, announcing its “PRESENCE,” the mood brightens and becomes excited and celebratory.

## Section 2: Activity 5

These phrases give Richard Corey a sense of dignity or nobility – as if he were a king or somebody of royal blood. Not only is he rich, but he is in fact like a king to the townspeople. By using sophisticated, descriptive language the poet makes his diction rich and dignified – just like Richard Corey himself.

## Section 2: Follow-up Activities

### Extra Help

1. The poem is a sonnet.
2. Two examples are “eager plane” and “shouting wind.”
3. The poet in his plane is “turning and leaping like a dancer.”
4. An example is “he is the airplane.”
5. “The poet, John Magee, wrote it to convey to people who had never flown before what flying is actually like.”
6. “Go slowly and emphasize every other syllable with your voice.”
7. Examples are the “burning blue” of the sky and the “wind-swept heights.”
8. The emotion is “the utter joy of flying.”

9. The words are these: “‘High Flight’ is a sonnet about a man flying his own plane.”
10. “In this poem we see that flying is more than just moving through air; it is a divine, mystical experience that shows us the beauty in life.”

### Enrichment

1. In using such short lyric forms, don’t try to do too much. Don’t tell your reader what to think. Think of a moment or an image and put it under a microscope. Let the reader’s imagination build on your words.
2. a. and b. With an epitaph the intent is humorous. Try to capture the essence of the person’s life in a humorous way. If you’re writing about somebody else, remember this: when you sum up a person’s life in four lines, it’s hard not to trivialize that life, so at least be funny doing it. Perhaps you know a particularly funny person to write about. If you’re writing about yourself, don’t trivialize; instead, think of it as a chance to get in a little dig at the world you’re leaving behind.
3. Answers will vary here, depending on the poet. It might be a useful exercise to ask yourself the same questions. Why do you write poetry? Imagine that you’re the poet in the video you selected. Compare your own answers with those of the actual poet. If your answers are similar, you might want to study the poet further in Section 3.

### Section 3: Activity 1

1. a. The speaker strangles his lover, Porphyria, and sits up with her dead body all night. This suggests that he is violent, possessive, and mentally disturbed.
- b. It appears he did not like seeing Porphyria leave to go back to her “vainer ties” (probably her husband). He wanted the moments when they were together to go on forever (“That moment she was mine, mine, fair/Perfectly pure and good:”). The only way to do this, he decided, was to kill her. At the end of the poem he seems calm, even happy, but no less deranged for what he has done.
2. The speaker doesn’t seem out of the ordinary. He’s likely a businessman or a banker, since he is standing on Bay Street which is the heart of Toronto’s financial district. He has a conversational way of talking and uses a lot of slang like “gag,” “old geezer,” “the whole/damn street,” “for my money.” He seems pleasant enough in that he enjoys the bizarre sight of the old man; he doesn’t consider him a nuisance or a bum like many people would.
3. He finds the “old geezer” “refreshing.” He seems to admire the spirit of a person who appears destitute and yet carries himself with such confidence. In particular, he likes the top hat. The old man’s clothing is worn out, but he is proud to wear the top hat – a symbol of wealth and power. It’s as if the old man is the most important person on the street, and at that moment, the speaker is happy to agree. The old man is, after all, colourful, jaunty, and seemingly unafraid of being different, unlike the thousands of other people you’d ordinarily see on Bay Street, identically dressed and faceless.

4. The speaker describes himself as “weak and weary.” He has been burying himself in books in order to take his mind off the death of his beloved Lenore. The “dreary” night matches his mood. He’s depressed, and the appearance of the raven only seems to aggravate him. It seems as if the bird has been sent to taunt him and drive him deeper into despair – to the point of madness.
5. In reading “Richard Cory,” you learn almost nothing about the man. You are told that he is rich, wears fine clothes, and has kingly manners, but you never learn anything about what he is thinking. If Richard Cory were the speaker, you would see the world from his point of view. You would gain insight into his thoughts and might even learn the reasons behind his suicide. If this were the case, the ending would not be such a surprise.

### Section 3: Activity 2

1.

	“The Raven”	“The Top Hat”
<b>Speaker</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• depressed</li> <li>• dreary mood</li> <li>• long, slow lines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cheerful</li> <li>• upbeat</li> <li>• bright mood in poem</li> <li>• fast rhythm</li> </ul>
<b>Language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• formal</li> <li>• sometimes archaic (old-fashioned)</li> <li>• sense of wanting to slow down and delve into the encounter</li> <li>• creation of euphony – sense of smooth flow</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no attempt made to create euphony</li> <li>• ordinary speech patterns copied by poet</li> <li>• conversational, simple language</li> <li>• casual tone</li> </ul>
<b>Rhythm</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• almost hypnotic rhythm</li> <li>• long, slow-moving lines</li> <li>• accent on every other syllable</li> <li>• many rhymes on “-ore” – a long, echoing vowel sound</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rhythm of ordinary speech</li> <li>• short, broken phrases</li> <li>• no attempt made to create euphony</li> </ul>



2. Dylan Thomas's poem is an appeal to fight against death and live life to its fullest. His style is passionate and intense. He uses repetition to make his message of "Do not go gentle" and "Rage, rage," seem like a chant – a spell cast against death. He writes in long phrases full of liquid consonants to create a euphonious sound. Because of this, his poems are most powerful when read aloud. He uses strong verbs and figures of speech to create powerful images of life: "Old age should burn and rave"; "frail deeds might have danced"; "Blind eyes could blaze like meteors." Notice that these are very effective examples of personification and simile. Did you think of any other characteristics?
3. The speaker we assume is Sol's nephew. He has reduced his uncle's life to a story that might be told at any casual gathering. He has trivialized Sol's life to such a degree that you wonder if he has even made up the whole story.

What sort of person is the speaker? There are many possibilities. He seems to like the sound of his own voice. Many of his sentences run on in a disorganized fashion. He is, perhaps, careless and insensitive in that he is indifferent to any pain Sol might have felt.

On the other hand, you might believe differently – that the speaker is a positive person who prefers to remember Uncle Sol's indomitable spirit – a person who looks for the bright side of the pain and suffering of others. Even in death, he believes Uncle Sol is still fighting, starting up a worm farm underground.

4. The very conversational, almost babbling style reflects the speaker's own disorganization. For example, the first stanza ends right in the middle of "Uncle Sol." The speaker has difficulty telling the story without becoming long-winded and bringing in irrelevant details. This is reflected in the arrangement of lines; some are long, others short, but there are few natural breaks between them. In fact, the entire poem appears to be one run-on sentence. Did you think of any other characteristics of the poet's style?

### Section 3: Activity 3

1. Many details about Keats' life could strike you as interesting: the fact that he came from such humble beginnings, that he was originally interested in medicine, that he retained his positive outlook despite a terminal illness, or that he felt he was a failure as a poet. Any others?
2.
  - a. Alden Nowlan makes it clear that he would like to meet Keats as though they were old pals. They'd play pinball and drink gin and send out for Chinese food.
  - b. He realizes it wouldn't work; Keats' poems are still fresh and alive, but Keats himself is long dead. And even if he weren't, the speaker admits he would be too shy to intrude and would be so awestruck at the prospect of being in Keats' presence that he wouldn't be able to talk.
3.
  - a. The first stanza speaks of the fullness of autumn – with loaded vines, ripe fruit, filled nuts, and flowers for the bees.

- b. Of course, any image in this stanza could be your favourite. Did you pick the one that stood out for you or moved you the most?
4.
  - a. Autumn appears as a thresher sitting on a granary floor, a reaper drowsing beside a “half-reaped furrow,” a gleaner carrying a sheaf of grain on his or her head, and finally as a person making cider out of picked fruits.
  - b. All of these people are harvesting nature’s bounty, which is what happens in autumn since it is the climax or culmination of all the other seasons.
5.
  - a. Answers may vary although the strongest possibility is that the images here appeal primarily to sight and hearing.
  - b. The effect of piling image upon image is to build to a climax; all of the seasons have built up to this moment of harvest. It is the last perfect moment before the beauty of autumn turns to the cold of winter.
6. Margaret Atwood spent much of her early life in the bush country of Quebec and Ontario. There she observed nature and its power firsthand.
7. While answers may vary to some degree, here is one of the strongest possibilities:  
  
 The theme of “The Planters” is that pioneering is a gruelling, exhausting, and perhaps hopeless task. Some people were able to continue by denying the reality of their toil and concentrating on dreams of future rewards. Others, unable to deceive themselves, lost all hope.
8. Some of the words that contribute to the sense of hopelessness are “jagged,” “stumpy,” “dusty,” “dirt,” “illusion,” “broken,” and “dark side.”
9.
  - a. **Simile:** “solid to them as a shovel,”
  - b. **Metaphor:** “candles/flickering in the wind”
10. In the first stanza the immigrant woman still has with her the trappings of her past “civilized” life – a book, a bag of knitting, a pink shawl. By contrast, the rugged, uncompromising land to which she has come is described in the stanzas that follow as a land of “desolation,” “hills,” “swamps,” “barren sand,” and “driftlogs.” The woman seems ill-equipped indeed for her new life in this wild place.
11. Frost lived on a farm in New England where he enjoyed wandering through the rural countryside. Out of his love and his attention to the details of nature came the inspiration for many of his poems.
12. It had been a sorrowful day for the speaker, a day he “rued” or regretted. The crow’s act of shaking snow on him has lightened his mood so “some part” of the poet’s day is saved and happy. The part of the day, though, that has already passed remains something to be “rued” – something unhappy.



13. The boy “learned all there was/To learn about not launching out too soon.” Perhaps the speaker is suggesting that swinging on birches teaches a person to enjoy the freedom of youth while it lasts and not to go “launching” out too soon into the responsibilities of adulthood. Also, the boy learns how to keep “his poise,” a valuable lesson since one must learn to balance between extremes in life.
14. Like the boy, the poet would like to escape, not permanently, but temporarily, from the responsibilities of life. Then he would like to “begin over.” He suggests that swinging on a birch is like swinging between heaven and earth. The swing gives a person both escape from, and return to, life.

### Section 3: Follow-up Activities

#### Extra Help

1.
  - a. Speaker 1 = Passage D
  - b. Speaker 2 = Passage B
  - c. Speaker 3 = Passage A
  - d. Speaker 4 = Passage C
2.
  - a. Style 1 = Passage B
  - b. Style 2 = Passage D
  - c. Style 3 = Passage C
  - d. Style 4 = Passage A

#### Enrichment

1. This activity was meant to be fun, but it also gave you some practice for the Section 3 assignment in which you will be writing about the lives and poems of two poets. If you want, try answering the same questions that you would ask about the poets you choose, yourself. If you find that some of your answers aren’t that exciting, then simply embellish the facts a bit. After all, you are a great **creative** writer. Present your material in a way that shows that you are an interesting person and poet – an individual worth studying in detail.
2. Once you’ve written a draft of your sonnet and you feel you have all the ideas and the rhymes sorted out, check the rhythm of the poem. Are you emphasizing five syllables in each line? Do the lines flow? Can they be read aloud easily? A good sonnet always sounds best when read aloud. Read it to a friend and get a second opinion.







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